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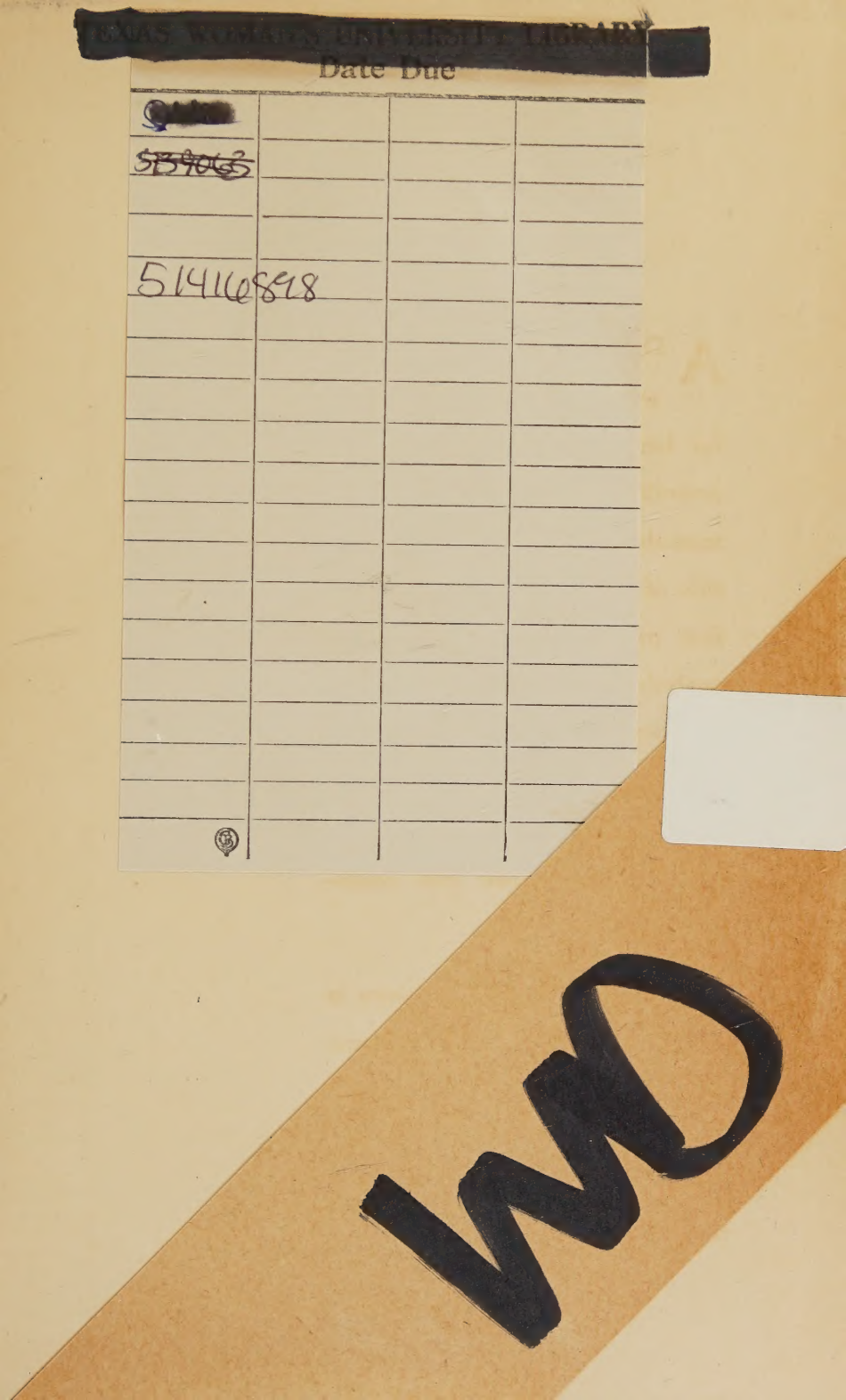

LANDMARKS

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LANDMARKS

A Reprint of
some Essays and other Pieces
Published between the Years
1894 and 1922

by
LADY BELL, D.B.E.

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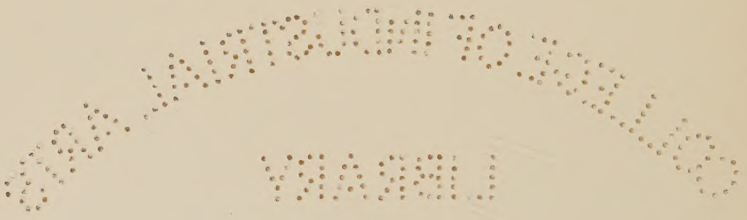

TO

MY GRANDCHILDREN

THESE COMMENTS ON LIFE

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I wish to return my sincere thanks to the Editors or Proprietors of the following periodicals who have given me permission to reprint articles of mine which they had published : *The Times*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Westminster Gazette* (now amalgamated with the *Daily News*), *Time and Tide*, the *Cornhill Magazine* (John Murray), the *Independent Review* and the *Albany Review* (John Lane), *La Science Sociale* (MM. Firmin Didot). I am also indebted to Miss Dorothy Ward for permission to include the paper on Mrs. Humphry Ward.

Further, I must express my gratitude to Monsieur Jusserand, Membre de l'Institut, former Ambassador to the U.S.A., who has been good enough to give me much valuable information about education in France ; to Mr. J. F. Crace, of Eton, who has kindly given me information about the Eton of to-day ; to Mrs. Chapman, for tracing the whereabouts of some of the pieces, and for assistance in other ways ; and to my secretary, Miss Phyllis S. Owen, for the same work of tracing, and also for clerical work and constant help.

FLORENCE BELL.

LONDON,
February 1929.

To reprint, to republish, after a lapse of years, essays or articles describing the social conditions of a given time, is to realise afresh the fluidity of circumstance, the unceasingness of change.

Such descriptions are as Landmarks, which, as we look back along the road, help us to estimate the distance we have traversed.

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PART I

LANDMARKS

What People Read

Written in 1905

We are anxious, conscientiously anxious, in these days, to know what the working man reads. We are anxious to know what he does. He is visited, he is written about, his doings are chronicled, his reading is tabulated; and then the dwellers in drawing-rooms read the results with some concern and wonder what can be done to put it all right. They read, for example, that, out of twenty families whose reading is inquired about, fifteen men read nothing but the sporting papers: and that the highest flight among the five wives who read at all is penny novelettes. But, given the difference of conditions, would not the corresponding drawing-room statistics, if tabulated with equal care, show much the same results? We are misled, perhaps, by the fact that it is not yet the custom that the houses of the well-to-do should be as methodically investigated as those of the poor; and those of us on whom is not turned the fierce light that beats upon a slum, are thus able to pass muster, our deficiencies unobserved. Else it is possible that, out of twenty households in Mayfair or in Belgravia, there would be ten where the husband reads mainly the newspapers, and the wife almost exclusively fiction.

But so blissfully do we delude ourselves in this matter that the most inadequate readers among us exclaim with genuine surprise and dismay when we realise what the majority of the working classes are

in the habit of reading, or when we find that they do not read at all. We then solace ourselves by bringing out one of those comforting easy phrases which we carry about ready to apply to any place in the social fabric that seems to need it, and we say: "With the spread of education the working classes will read something better worth reading." But will they? The spread of education has a broad back; it is made to bear the burden of many unrealised, if not unrealisable, projects. Education is being spread very thin indeed for the people who are in question; and I will venture to say, judging from what I have observed from the reading of men and women who have been what is called "educated," and of those who have not, that it is not the spread of education that will alter the reading of the great mass of the community—those who swell the tables of statistics and bring down the average of the enlightened.

Reading, perhaps, is not so prevalent a habit in any class of society as we like to think. But there is such a pressure of opinion in favour of it, that it is difficult for the most candid to admit that they do not care about it. All the same I believe that those who do not are in a much larger proportion than we imagine. But they are skilfully silent on the subject, and our attention is not called to them: we forget, therefore, that they are so numerous. Whereas the book-lovers of all ages have proudly proclaimed to the listening earth their privileged aptitude; and the mind of the reader leaps to meet the words in which Bacon, Montaigne, Voltaire, Lamb, Thackeray, and the rest have celebrated

and justified their favourite bent. But note that these are the few: those even who understand them are comparatively few, and we are in danger of forgetting that this is but a splendid minority which has sent its trumpet-call re-echoing through Time. These are the articulate, the eloquent. But the great majority of mankind, let us frankly concede it, are not articulate; and those who belong to the inarticulate, in every layer of society, are doomed obviously to have for their spokesmen those who can speak, to be written about by those who can write. The non-readers are doomed to have their point of view formulated by those who do not share it, who do not understand it, and who are liable to state what they think it ought to be instead of what it is. The educated speak for the uneducated, and the readers for those who do not read; and the result is, that we attribute to a misleadingly large proportion of the public a far greater zest and desire for reading than they in reality possess.

I have tried, during the intercourse of many years with a population of ironworkers in the north of England, to find out, among other subjects, what part reading plays in their lives, what proportion of them read at all, and what kind of books they prefer. I have also attempted to make the same inquiry, though over not so large a field, among well-to-do dwellers in London; and also among the dwellers in a country town, shop-keepers as well as more genteel residents. And, on the whole, the results, allowing for the difference of conditions and surroundings, are surprisingly alike—that is, an immense majority of all these persons, of both

sexes, read, with hardly any selection of their own, what comes under their hand, what is suggested to them, and what they see being read by the person next door.

The reading that comes under the hand of the workman consists chiefly of the newspapers hawked about the streets, and those supplied by the small composite shops found in the poorer quarters. These shops sell various other goods—groceries, haberdashery—and put before their public an unfailing supply of daily and weekly newspapers suited to their tastes, and penny novelettes. Roughly speaking, about one-third of the workmen read books as well as newspapers ; about two-thirds of them the newspaper only. Of these, some read only a daily paper, the favourite being a local half-penny evening paper which seems to be in the hands of every man and woman, and almost every child. It contains a summary of general news, a serial story, and a good deal of sporting information, also local gossip and commercial news. Many workmen read, in addition to this paper, the weekly Sunday papers, containing several sheets, and providing a good deal of miscellaneous information. These are great favourites, and help to make the Sunday pass quite harmlessly, at any rate, for many among the workmen who spend the day in bed reading and smoking.

About a quarter of the men do not read at all ; that is to say, if there is anything coming off in the way of sport that they are interested in, they buy a paper to see the result. That hardly comes under the head of reading. The boys read papers that

make them laugh—*Comic Cuts* and the like. I have seen a large number of comic illustrated papers, compared with which *Answers* and *Tit-Bits* are the very aristocracy of the press. The *Winning Post*, and other sporting papers, which represent the whole world as governed by the huge spirit of betting, are more and more in the hands of readers of all ages, with very undesirable results. But the question of betting literature, for which there is an ever-increasing demand, is too wide to go into here. The *Illustrated Police Budget* is a sensational and much-read paper. In the number which has lately come into my hand there is a special double-page illustration headed "Father Murders Six Children." Outside the paper, on one cover, is a picture of a man cutting his wife's throat, on the other of an actress being thrashed by an irate wife. This is not the ideal literature. And yet, when one comes to think of it, have we not, all of us, on occasion, revelled in detective stories—in Monsieur Lecoq and Sherlock Holmes? Why should not the public to whom the *Illustrated Police Budget* is more accessible than these romances wish to be equally thrilled and excited?

The above publications, which make so large part of the reading of the men and boys, are something between a pamphlet and a newspaper. As to their other reading, it comprises novels, sometimes travels, hardly any poetry, a few essays, books relating to their work, and one or two biographies. I give below some samples taken at random from answers given at over one hundred cottages in reply to inquiries respecting reading.

Cottage No. 1.—The husband is a great reader, chiefly fiction. The wife would be, but has not time; every moment is taken up in patching and mending.

Cottage No. 5.—Bright and intelligent woman, looking after her home and children; is fond of reading exciting novels, under protest from the husband, who thinks it waste of time.

Cottage No. 9.—The husband is fond of reading comic papers.

Cottage No. 11.—Husband a daily paper, the wife likes a good novel.

Cottage No. 13.—Husband a great reader of seafaring tales; the wife has no time to read.

Cottage No. 14.—Mother reads, and the sons read the sporting papers.

Cottage No. 17.—Both are fond of reading novels.

Cottage No. 22.—All are fond of reading.

Cottage No. 24.—Mother likes Mrs. Henry Wood; the man prefers works of travel.

Cottage No. 26.—Young couple never read books; the husband reads the daily paper.

Cottage No. 31.—Old couple fond of reading, especially the *Sunday Magazine*.

Cottage No. 37.—Couple both fond of reading; like novels best.

Cottage No. 43.—Mother and son; she likes tales of adventure and he likes novels.

Cottage No. 44.—Two sisters and a brother, all fond of reading and prefer novels.

Cottage No. 47.—Five sons, all fond of reading tales of adventure; the father prefers the daily paper "to see what Parliament is doing."

Cottage No. 52.—A respectable young couple, both fond of reading; but the wife says she likes sewing best.

Cottage No. 55.—Husband dislikes any kind of reading. Wife likes reading children's stories.

Cottage No. 58.—Husband only cares to read the Racing News.

Cottage No. 61.—The wife spends much of her time reading the penny illustrated papers—"give one such an account of 'igh life and elopements." Husband does not approve of such tastes. He spends all Sunday in bed reading; did not say what kind of literature.

Cottage No. 66.—Wife likes stories of country life.

Cottage No. 67.—Household in which the woman can't read, her sons read the newspapers only.

Cottage No. 69.—Furnace-man reads "all the monthly magazines and Plato and Aristotle."

Cottage No. 72.—Always reads the evening papers, but does not bother with books.

Cottage No. 74.—Buys books relating to his work (a boiler-smith's foreman).

Cottage No. 78.—Reads specially books and magazines relating to his work.

Cottage No. 79.—Reads novels, chiefly Mrs. Henry Wood.

Cottage No. 80.—Fond of reading good stories in the papers.

Cottage No. 82.—Only read novels.

Cottage No. 84.—Young people, both fond of Mrs. Henry Wood.

Cottage No. 87.—Don't read much but the papers; prefer talking at the street corners.

Cottage No. 89.—Husband a great reader, particularly fond of history: sea battles and their results. Wife reads Shakespeare's works with the greatest pleasure; says she revels in *Hamlet*. For lighter reading, she likes Marie Corelli and Miss Braddon.

Cottage No. 91.—Great reader, specially fond of books relating to his work. Wife does not read at all, considers buying newspapers a great waste of money. She reproves her mother-in-law for liking to read the evening paper.

Cottage No. 93.—Always poring over engineering books. Finds "time to read theological works," and makes "time for thinking."

Cottage No. 96.—Poor scholar, seldom tries to read anything. Eldest sister reads Mrs. Henry Wood and Shakespeare aloud to the rest of the family.

Cottage No. 99.—Woman never learnt to read when she was a child; thinks the village schoolmistress had a spite against her.

Cottage No. 102.—Reads everything he can get hold of.

Cottage No. 103.—Husband never reads at all; wife never has time.

Cottage No. 104.—Man very fond of reading, but always chooses books "a bit desperate."

Cottage No. 105.—Spends all his time reading, but always *Tit-Bits* and *Answers* for the competitions and "football guessing."

Cottage No. 108.—Husband does not care for reading. Wife, about forty, never learnt.

Some of the readers among the above are men of

the very keenest intelligence, reading the best books they can lay hands on, and eagerly availing themselves of the very good Free Library belonging to the town in question. The population of the town is over 100,000 ; the number of borrowers from the Free Library is 4,500, that is, $4\frac{1}{2}$ people out of every hundred take out a book. In many cases, of course, this represents a larger number of readers than borrowers, as books may be passed on to other members of the family ; but it does not represent, as may be seen, a great number of the public. Statistics of the mere number of volumes taken out may be misleading, as the same people take out books over and over again.

It is not within my scheme to give the details, accessible in many other publications, of the kind of reading chosen from the Free Library. I will only say that a large proportion of what is taken out is fiction. The Free Libraries are not so largely used by the very poor. It is quite possible that some of these are deterred by the mere ceremonies that have to be gone through to take out a book. A woman who lives in a distant part of the town, whose outer garment may be a ragged shawl fastened with a pin, may not like going up an imposing flight of stairs, getting a ticket, giving a name, looking through a catalogue, having the book entered, etc. ; whereas many of these, if the book were put into their hands, would read it. Women of all classes know how often our actions are governed by our clothes, and how the fact of being unsuitably clad for a given course of conduct may be enough to prevent us from embark-

ing upon it. The establishment, in recent years, of children's libraries connected with the schools is giving admirable results. The children get into the habit of borrowing books and taking them home, and are more likely to frequent other libraries as they grow up.

The people who, for one reason or another, do not use the Free Library, will sometimes be willing to frequent smaller and less imposing centres of improvement. In two small lending libraries connected with the Iron Works, the one standing actually in the midst of the works, the other in a workmen's club in the town, the reading-rooms are well frequented, and give the impression of a goodly number of readers ; but, as a matter of fact, on the works' Library List there are about seventy borrowers out of a possible thousand or more, and at the workmen's club sixty out of a possible six hundred. There are here, again, more readers than there are borrowers on the list, as each book is handed round and read by several people. These somewhat unambitious libraries have been gradually provided with books, on the principle, not so much of directing a course of reading, as of providing a course that would be acceptable to the readers. They contain children's books, most of Dickens, most of Scott, some of Miss Yonge, Hall Caine, Bulwer Lytton, a good many of Mrs. Henry Wood, a number of miscellaneous tales of a harmless kind, and also some books that may be grouped together as " improving " such as—I quote at random from the catalogue—*A Chapter on Science*, *Voyages of Columbus*, *A Dash from Khartoum*, *The*

Great Boer War, The Great Invasion of 1813, some poets, some Shakespeare, and some essays. The latter books are not much taken out; again here, what is chiefly required is fiction. This need not surprise us. The town we are speaking of exists for the iron trade, and is inhabited mainly by workmen engaged in strenuous physical labour; they are not very likely, at the conclusion of a day's work, to wish to read anything that involves an effort of attention. What do busy hardworking men in other walks of life read when they come in from their day's work? Nearly all of them, I believe, whether civil servants, politicians, men of business, barristers, soldiers, read just about the same thing, with a difference, as the working man; that is, they read the papers and they read novels.

At a conference of librarians a short time since, an expert said that he believed the reading of most men—again eliminating those whose calling is concerned with books—is done before they are thirty. This also is not surprising; for the busier a man is, and the more his career absorbs his thoughts and energies, the more, presumably, will he want to read something that will give him absolute relaxation. In middle-class homes this reading is generally provided and sampled by the wife.

The working men's wives, on the other hand, read less than their husbands; they have no definite intervals of leisure, and not so many of them care to read. Among those who do, most of them, I am told, prefer something about love with a dash of religion in it. This is the character of most

of the penny stories which form the bulk of the literature accessible to them. They like some relief to the greyness of their lives, some suggestion of other possibilities; but for many of them, anything that excites laughter goes too far in the other direction. One thing to be deplored is the very small print of these publications. One can hardly expect for a penny to get a complete novel in pica; but there is no doubt that the very bad print of these books, read often by imperfect light, is largely responsible for the damaged eyesight and headaches among the women as they grow older. It would be, to my mind, a public benefaction if it were possible to organise some distribution of books on hire in good print—wholesome harmless fiction of the kind that would interest the cottage readers—literally a circulating library for the people. A hawker with a barrow might carry these round the poorer streets, and offer them on hire at the cottage doors, as so much that is absolutely useless is now carried round and offered. If such books, published at sixpence, or even ninepence, were let out at a penny or twopence a week, according to their size and price, the hawker would probably drive a good trade. The selection of books, of course, would not be left to him; and at the beginning, he would have to be guaranteed against loss. He would certainly find customers; for the working man's wife, as a rule, is ready to hire anything that is offered to her. If she has a penny in her pocket she will be quite ready to spend it on the first thing that comes within her ken, as she stands at her door. It may be a "tallyman" who comes along with

something to sell on the hire system—a worsted shawl, perhaps, a workbox, or even a gramophone ; but, whatever it is, the woman buys it simply because it is suggested to her—after which, having embarked on buying on the hire system, she ends in having to pawn some of her belongings to pay for what she has hired. I say nothing of the book-maker—his books are of another kind—who drives his flourishing trade by calling incessantly at the women's houses, and suggesting to them a channel for their available cash.

More than one would expect of the women between fifty and sixty cannot read ; even some of those of forty. But it seems to be a deprivation that sits lightly upon them. One of them, a caretaker, sat knitting all day long. I asked her if she never read. No, she said, she was " no scholar," and she was often glad she hadn't learned to read, as, if she had, she might have " put off " (i.e. wasted) " the time reading instead of doing needlework." Nearly all the women of the working classes have a feeling that it is wrong to sit down with a book. And if there is anything more practical to do, is there not some truth in this view ? I have heard a hard working housemaid reply, when her employer inquired into the books available for the maids, that there was no need for any, as there was " so much to do, it would not be right to read." And I believe that even among the well-to-do this idea persists a great deal more than one would at the first blush admit.

What else does it imply when women who live in London for six or even eight months of the year,

tell you, as they constantly do, that in London they have no time to read ? We all of us have the same number of hours in the twenty-four ; and having " no time " means that, in the crowd of conflicting occupations, those which seem to be the least important, or perhaps to speak more truthfully, the least congenial, are jostled away.

What does Mrs. Evans-Transome, who lives in Berkeley Square, and says she has no time to read, do with her time ? If she is the sort of competent woman in whom capacity translates itself in continuous movement, she will, instead of reading, run out to inspect a school after breakfast, or to order clothes for her children. And Mrs. Perks, in Cottage Row, if she also is competent and deserving, will, at the same hour, be rubbing up her fire-irons. And they both of them are probably thus contributing more to the order and efficiency of the community than if they were, with a sense of duty unfulfilled—in itself a lowering agent—sitting down to read. Do not we sometimes make a fetish of the Book in the Home, apart from what the book is about ? If recreation, stimulus, change of thought can be obtained as effectually, or more effectually, in some other way, may it not be as profitable ? Mrs. Evans-Transome's study is of men rather than of books ; but she knows all that is going on, she knows the names and the outsides of the books that she thinks she is going to read when she goes to the country, and feels almost as if she had read them already.

And what of Mrs. Evans-Transome's neighbour, Lady Ranleigh, who is more decidedly intellectual ?

How is her choice of books governed ? What are her opportunities of selection, if selection there be ? Compared with those of Mrs. Perks, they seem almost unbounded. Lady Ranleigh belongs to a good circulating library. She sees the half-crown Reviews, she reads literary papers, she knows the names, probably, of most of the great writers of every country. When she hears them, she remembers having heard them before ; that is, in most cases, the extent of her acquaintance with them. She has presumably learnt pieces out of some of the great poets or even of the great prose writers, in her youth. She does not read many of them now. She would be honestly surprised to find that she has not read Chaucer, Sir Thomas Browne, Pascal, Montaigne, Addison. She has heard of them so long that she feels as if she knew them very well indeed. But, all the same, she does not. Mrs. Perks has perhaps not heard of them at all. She may be dispensed from reading most of them, even though they are now published in threepenny editions. These admirable little editions, by the way, are widely bought, probably neither by Lady Ranleigh nor Mrs. Perks, but by the people who come between. Lady Ranleigh, if she wanted to read those writers, would get them in another form. Mrs. Perks does not find them at the little shops at the corner of the back street, which sell the literature that she affects.

How much time has Lady Ranleigh to read, and what use does she make of it ? How does she spend her day ? In the morning after breakfasting, after considering her household affairs, reading the paper,

and perhaps writing some letters, she might conceivably, before going out, have half an hour or so to read if she chose. If she lunches at home, she may have a short time for reading afterwards. She goes out in the afternoon. If she comes home to tea, and has no visitors,—but she generally has,—she then has more time for reading. She looks at the evening papers. She may have another half hour to read after dinner, on the day on which she does not go out. This gives altogether a possible one and a half or two and half hours for reading, leaving for occupations which drape themselves under the dignified title of Social Duties, all the morning except half an hour, all the afternoon except half an hour, and from five o'clock till bedtime, excepting either one or two half-hours. Most well-to-do women—I am not here considering those who put into their leisure neither reading nor anything else that can pretend to be a duty—could, and do, have this time at their command. Mrs. Perks, who has no one but herself to do all her own housework, to look after her children and her husband, mend for them and cook for them, has not so much time as this.

Now, given all the splendid opportunities of choice, and all the time to profit by them enjoyed by the inhabitants of Berkeley Square, what is the result? It is, broadly speaking, that Lady Ranleigh and nine-tenths of the women of her kind, read, like Mrs. Perks, simply the books which have been suggested to them, and which they have found under their hand. The observation of many years has led me to this conclusion; and a more categorical inquiry

among about fifty drawing-room readers in London, a little time since, confirmed me in this view. For, during the past six months, they had all—I should say we had all—been reading the same books. There were on all our tables five or six large biographies, a book of essays, some letters that had attracted attention, one or two novels by people we knew, one or two new novels by writers of position. This was what there was to show for our winter's reading ; and we had handed all these on to our busy husbands, or our idle husbands, as the case might be, with which to beguile their leisure. In the face of this very hand-to-mouth course of reading, can we wonder that the average working man and his wife, who left school at fourteen, and who do not hear much talk of books or of writers, should not eagerly seek for the masterpieces of literature, or gravitate, as we seem to expect them to do, towards the very best ? How can we wonder that uneducated Mrs. Perks reads a penny novelette when educated Lady Ranleigh is reading what to her is the exact counterpart ? And small blame, it seems to me, to either of them. They are both of them reading for their diversion ; and the book has presumably fulfilled its mission if it has given a cheering, stimulating change of thought, if it has suggested wider possibilities of life. But let us be clear that it is not the same book which will do this equally for the two readers we have been describing. The lives of Mrs. Perks and Lady Ranleigh are not the same width to begin with ; therefore a suggestion of wider possibilities cannot be the same for both. Lady Ranleigh finds Mrs. Perks reading *The*

Village Sunbeam, and says how much better it would be if she would read *Daniel Deronda*. But *Daniel Deronda* cannot be bought for a penny; and if it could, Mrs. Perks would probably prefer to read something which she is more likely to be able to interpret by her own experience. That experience will not, for instance, interpret for her the great scene between Klesmer and Gwendolen, which has been so full of soul-searching revelation to many readers whom a cottage idyll would not inspire or help. I am putting aside the question of literary merit; with this, Mrs. Perks, unversed in criticism, has nothing to do. The books she reads must be considered from an entirely different standpoint. I have looked through a number of the penny stories she and her friends mostly read. They are irreproachable; and they have the most curious resemblance of plot. In four that I read, one after the other, the poor and virtuous young man turned out to be a long-lost son, and became rich and powerful. Mrs. Perks finds no difficulty in believing that this is likely, as a child believes in a fairy tale; but Lady Ranleigh's more extensive experience would incline her to doubt it. And besides, the improbable has, in the books read by her, to be handled with a certain amount of literary skill to make her accept it.

I lately saw a passage in a popular penny serial, in which a drawing-room conjurer produced out of his handkerchief a wreath of flowers dropping blood, which fell at a baronet's feet. He (not unnaturally) turned livid; while Lady Mabel sang louder than before. The whole of this passage

might seem convincing to Mrs. Perks, as being likely to happen in the drawing-room of baronets and high-born ladies; to Lady Ranleigh, it would probably not. So in *East Lynne*, beloved of the working classes among all books—that skilful, admirable compound of the goody and the sensational—Mrs. Perks is not at all surprised that, when the fugitive wife returns to her home with another gown and a grey front on, she is accepted without suspicion by her injured husband and child as the new governess; nor that, when Lord Mount Severn shakes hands with the lawyer who comes to call, the author should add the explanation: "for he was deemed the most affable peer of the age."

The essential, it seems to me, of fiction that is satisfying for ordinary readers, is, that it should be sufficiently within their experience to be intelligible and sufficiently outside it to be accepted as possible. We all, according to our kind, need in our reading something that stirs our imagination and excites our interest. To this end an infinite number of us, as I believe, crave a story; some of us requiring it more skilfully draped in literature than do others. The art of the story-teller is as old as time; and he will always find an unending succession of listeners. And since in these days the story is on the printed page, instead of being related in the market-place, it can be told in every house, and thus find more listeners still. Let us make up our minds, then, that most of the books we read are likely to be story-books; and we shall vex our soul the less when we find this conclusion supported

by all the library lists, by all our observation, by all our experience. We are often apt to court disappointment by postulating more success as attainable than it is possible to achieve, and then looking upon what we do attain as failure. Do not let us expect too much from our efforts to educate others, or even to educate ourselves ; do not let us imagine that, because in the next generation so many more thousands or millions of people will know how to read by the time they are six years old, there will therefore be a corresponding number who will seek, in preference to the reading which only amuses, that which stimulates and ennobles. I fear this may not come to pass, since I know that we, the well-intentioned, the educated, the educators, do not always choose that course for ourselves. Would that we could all learn, all be taught, to choose as well as to read ; it is the more difficult lesson of the two. And I verily believe that we are most of us incapable of learning it.

*
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Postscript of 1929 *to "What People Read"*

Twenty-four years have passed since the above article was written, years that have brought riotous and unexampled changes into our lives, turning our manners and customs upside down, giving us habits that were unknown to us, possibilities that were incredible. Our habits of reading, such as they were—(I cannot too often repeat that I am not here discussing the kind of reading that bears any

resemblance to study)—have, like everything else we do, been transformed, disintegrated by the sudden irruption of Discovery and Invention into the world, and most specially by the irruption of the cinema, the broadcasting, the gramophone.

With the advent of broadcasting the story-teller of yore has come back into the market-place; but he is no longer seated in the midst of a crowd of eager listeners gazing at him, hanging on his words. He now, invisible to them, projects his tale on the waves of the air to thousands of unseen listeners.

With the advent of the cinema the picture-book comes to life before our eyes, raised to a power we had never imagined.

These new resources, this glorious fulfilment of our eternal demand—" Tell me a story ! " we cry through the ages—are especially precious to the dwellers in the country districts.

The modest suggestion made in the article of 1905, that a hawker should travel with a barrow through what are commonly called the mean streets of a town hawking books for hire at a penny, has not yet become a reality. But into the country-side a glorified hawker has now come. The Carnegie library van, counterpart of the circulating libraries of the town, rolls nowadays along remote country roads with eagerly welcomed books for the village library. As might be expected, the books chiefly chosen from the van are fiction, although many of the biographies in vogue are accessible to the village readers six months after publication, and are in due course taken out.

Another new opportunity given to the villages of

becoming better acquainted with books is now provided by the broadcasting " talks " on literature, given from London and other centres in regular series on given days. There are many intelligent people in the villages and outlying farms who look forward to these talks, and are brought by them into touch with the world outside to an extent inconceivable a few years ago. But it must be noted that a broadcast talk about a book does not always incite people to read that book. The talk may act in a different way ; it may take the place of the book talked about, which need not then be read. Many of the " listeners-in "—heavens, what an ugly, malformed locution is this which we are now condemned to use !—belong to those who are able to apprehend with greater facility that which they hear, than that which they read on the printed page. But reading, after all, is a means to an end, not an end in itself. We read either to acquire information, or to procure pleasure. If we acquire the same information in another way, or derive the same pleasure, the same end is attained.

In Lord Bryce's book on Modern Democracies we find, in the chapter on education : " We naturally slip into the belief that the power to read is a true measure of fitness," and the pages of his book which follow bring vividly before us the extent to which the intelligence of the Athenians, who had, he tells us, " no printed page to learn from," was stimulated and fertilised by listening to the legends and wisdom of their race told them in great plays and eloquent orations, and discussing them afterwards.

It is interesting to find a parallel to this to-day in the fact that passages both of prose and poetry read to a village audience will be eagerly listened to and assimilated, although it may be that none of that audience will take the further step of reading for themselves the books containing these passages, within their reach on the shelves of the village library.

An inquiry within a limited area as to what people read has again been made lately in working circles—chiefly among the women—of an industrial town. These are a few of the replies :

Likes Dickens's works.

Likes a detective story.

A good detective story with a bit of love in it.

Reads Marie Corelli and Edgar Wallace.

Reads the *Sunday Companion*—" It has a lovely serial running in it."

In these days there are many more newspapers, and many of them publish serial stories. In reply to an inquiry as to what is of most interest in the papers :

Many people read the Births, Marriages and Deaths. Some of the women read the recipes and household hints ; they also like to read the personal paragraphs, especially about the King and Queen, and one reader adds, " I never miss Princess Elizabeth."

The organisation of school libraries for children has been of great advantage to parents, who often read the books the children bring home.

And what of the so-called literary preferences to-day of another circle into whose reading we have been inquiring, the well-to-do dwellers in the

towns? As regards these readers, the cinema and the broadcasting, although they both probably play a quite definite part in the lives of the town dwellers, are not likely, as in the case of country readers, to affect their knowledge of books or their opportunities of reading. Indeed, as a matter of fact, the cinema and the wireless are likely to diminish the town dwellers' opportunities of reading by impinging on the small amount of leisure not yet destroyed by the encroachments and preoccupations of modern life. We cannot overlook the gramophone in this connection, though it is strange to find it a factor in the reading possibilities of the community. But there seems no doubt that it must influence these very potently. And many of us regard as a real danger the fact that the young of the present day declare that they can read better either for study or pleasure if they have a gramophone playing! and that some say they "cannot exist" unless it is started directly after breakfast in the room they are sitting in. This habit, from the point of view of either the musician or the reader, does not, to say the least of it, seem to be profitable; but there is no doubt that it must to-day be taken into account.

The ever-increasing facilities of transport, that factor which ultimately determines the habits of the community, tend more and more to destroy any opportunity of quiet occupation, and to make well-to-do people busier to-day both in their work and in their play. They can obviously undertake a much greater number of different "jobs" than they could before, because they can be transported

so much more quickly from one job to another. And for the same reason they can enjoy a much greater number of different pleasures. The result is that workers and idlers alike can rush without cessation, not only from one end of London to another during the day, but into the country and back in every direction. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the super-mobile seem to have no time to read at all.

Two agreeable women in London, belonging to the class called educated, both leading brim-full and apparently competent lives, stated categorically that they read nothing. One said, with a sweet smile and an air of finality, " There's never time to read anything in London, is there ? " and the other, with the air of acceptance of the inevitable, " I never have time to read anything at all."

As a matter of fact, there are now fewer opportunities of reading afforded by the actual framework of everyday life. Women used to read when their hair was being brushed : they now have no hair to brush. Men and women used to read in the train : they now do not travel by train. Domesticated couples used to read to one another and to their growing-up family by the fireside in their quiet evenings at home: couples nowadays are not always domesticated, they do not sit by the fireside, they do not have quiet evenings, and the growing-up family is usually out somewhere else.

But what of the people in London who do read ? (I still refer only to the " general " reader.) I think I am right in saying that very few of them buy books. I cannot remember who said, " If a book is worth

reading it is worth buying." This has never seemed to me a very sensible statement, as you cannot tell whether the book is worth reading unless you do read it, and if you buy it in order to read it and then find it is not worth reading . . . well, it seems a pity.

There is a good deal of poetry read nowadays. I have no space to discuss this interesting field of reading.

On the whole, the reading of people of the kind I am describing appears to consist, as it did twenty-three years ago, of books from the circulating library, books we are all recommending to one another : that is, the novels in vogue and especially the biographies in vogue. And readers might do a great deal worse. Biography is, so to speak, a form of compressed human intercourse. In reading a biography we penetrate into the very heart of a circle hitherto unknown to us, we become closely intimate with people we have never met, much more intimate indeed than if we met them in the flesh. We acquire a wider knowledge of human nature, and therefore more points of comparison than we had before, and we become aware that our small circle is one of an incredible number of similar spinning vortices, no more important to the other whirling systems than ours is to them. This, after all, in default of more serious results, is a lesson worth learning from what we read.

Our Present Vocabulary

WRITTEN IN 1907

All those who have attempted to write, who have known the uplifting joys and disheartening sorrows of that most enthralling as well as most exasperating of occupations, have also known the satisfaction of learning to play with words—the most beguiling of toys—learning to select, to align, to arrange and rearrange them, until at length, on some happy occasions, they seem to fall into their proper places. A grave responsibility lies with the writers of to-day with respect to that selection of words : for it is they who are constantly distributing a vocabulary to the readers of England and who must therefore see to it that what they are distributing remains uncontaminated.

A multitude of new words have recently come into our language. They are necessary and inevitable, since so much that is new has recently come into our lives, and the vocabulary of a nation is bound to reflect the national existence. There is a tribe, I believe, in Africa, who have a distinct and separate word for the murder of all their relations to the most distant degrees of affinity, a separate word for killing a great-aunt, a younger brother, or second cousin ; but no single word to express any form of love, or gratitude, or tenderness, or any of the softer emotions. And so in this country in our own day many words have been coined descriptive of every form of speed ; of hearing at a distance,

of seeing at a distance, of writing at a distance, of flying through the air, of moving along the ground, of propelling one's self in various ways, of going along on wheels, of killing by electricity, of curing by electricity, and all the rest ; but not one word has been coined for any new form of keeping still. It is not these entirely new words I wish to discuss ; it is the old words we use, and ill-use, and debase and deface, and alter and abbreviate, until our vocabulary is gradually dwindling into a poverty-stricken assemblage of worn and rubbed expressions, that have no more edge left upon them than the water-worn pebbles of the sea-shore.

The vocabulary of each one of us is a most important part of our equipment, and we ought designedly to keep it in the best condition possible. We do not pay enough attention to this particular branch of the education of our children. The vocabulary of our sons, no doubt, is occasionally ludicrous ; but it reflects our national system of education, and as such receives that official stamp of our national pride which entitles so many of our limitations to pass muster as advantages. Our daughters used to be the repositories of a gentler speech, but now they too have fallen from grace : they have adopted, and frequently exaggerated, the speech of their brothers. We hear many discussions in these days as to what a girl ought to learn, and the pioneers of progress among us would hold up their hands in horror at the idea of her being taught only to read and write. But this, it seems to me, would be an ample scheme of education, providing, that is, that she were taught What to read and How

to write. Too many of us are taught neither. But the preliminary to knowing how to use words in writing is knowing how to use them in speaking; and if we admit that a female child should be taught to talk at all, she should be taught to do so in the best way attainable. If we allow ourselves to be slipshod and untidy in talking, we are the more likely to be slipshod and untidy in writing. One snare that we are apt to fall into in speech is that we hardly ever seem able to finish our sentences, such as they are. This is again something that we ought to teach our children. We impress on them that they must finish one mouthful before beginning the next; we ought also to insist on their finishing one sentence before beginning the next. I overheard a conversation at the play the other day which offers some interesting examples of diction. Two well-dressed women sitting in the stalls were discussing a female friend. One said—"She is quite impossible, isn't she?" Now this expression, to begin with, the purist might condemn: a person can hardly be "impossible."—But we will admit this as an abridgment.—The other replied "She is so . . ." and then she left off. And the first said—"She is, you know, she really is." The second said "And it isn't as if . . ." then she left off again. And the first rejoined "Exactly."—That was the end. And in these few felicitous touches they described the character of their friend. We have gone a long way here from the finished word-portraits which the women of the eighteenth century used to hand round to their drawing-rooms. It might not perhaps make for greater amenity of

social intercourse if we did the same thing in these days, and if we all set to work to write sketches of one another and read them to the rest of our friends ; but it would certainly make for greater precision, both of thought and expression.

The auditorium of a theatre is a fruitful hunting-ground for those who would investigate our verbal resources, and the poverty of our vocabulary becomes still more apparent when it is a question of discussing a play. A Frenchman has said that the reason why in England there is always an orchestra playing loudly between the acts and making conversation well-nigh impossible, is in order to conceal the fact that we have nothing to say about the piece. It must be admitted that as a rule we have not very much. If the play has pleased us we say it is " nice " ; if it has not, we say it is " rot." Or if we do not wish to commit ourselves to such extremes of opinion our criticism can be subtly differentiated, and we say it is " rather nice " or " rather rot." Oh that we could, when we begin a new subject of conversation, break into a new set of unused expressions, as one breaks into a new pack of cards ! How grateful we are on occasion to those heaven-sent rare ones who find some fresh and vigorous collocation of words to arrest our jaded attention, who place the everyday terms in some new and glittering juxtaposition, that catches the light and penetrates us with a sense of exquisite apprehension !

Statistics are constantly being given us as to the number of words that various kinds of people are supposed to have in their vocabulary, ranging, I

believe, from the peasant, who is supposed to have about three hundred words, to somebody else—a prince perhaps ?—who has three thousand or more. But many people one hears talking in these days, young people especially, seem to know only six words in the way of descriptive epithets at any rate. They know " rot," of course, " rotter " and " rotten" ; they know " waster " and they know " a good sort " and " of the best," and these subdivisions appear to embrace the whole of mankind. There is absolutely no attempt at discrimination or choice of words, and therefore there is no choice of thought. This is the more to be regretted, as we must recognise that the ultimate verdict of taste, the final decision, in any period lies with the young, and not those whose judgment may be obscured by the habit of a former tradition. In matters of language, the young of both sexes are certainly the chief offenders to-day. They do not seem able to use the most ordinary word in its ordinary form. They speak of sitting-rooms as " sitters " and programmes as " proggers." A " deaser " for a deceased wife's sister is no doubt a useful abbreviation, considering the time spent in discussing the subject. The climax of truncation is reached when one hears of an undergraduate explaining quite seriously to the Head of his College that he had not been to chapel because he was a " gnogger," that is, an agnostic. And in a very short time, unless we are careful, we shall all of us be using these words ; we shall all be writing " gnogger," as well as saying it and it will probably be constantly used in the theological novel.

There is an Eastern proverb which says " The

way is short from the tongue to the ink-bottle." It is indeed. We now tolerate in print much that we used to protest against even in speech. Such words as " lecturette " and " sermonette " we now see in every newspaper. As to " suffragette," that is the most barbarous word of all, politics apart ; for " suffragette " if it means anything, according to the analogy of the words formed in the same way, should mean " a small suffrage," and not a female person who wants to obtain it. A certain number of current phrases in vogue swamping all individuality of thought, all choice of language, all grace of original expression, are now used by everyone ; phrases handed from one to the other like battered old coins, from which all brightness has long ago departed ; phrases stuck in anywhere, whether they fit the need of the sentence or not, and actually proffered to us as tokens for opinions. Among such formulas is saying a thing has " come to stay," with which some people answer everything that is said to them ; or that such a one is " on his own," the most shapeless and jerry-built phrase that was ever constructed. Still more objectionable is it to say that one is " fed up " with a thing, meaning that one has had enough of it ; or to say, if an incredible story is being told, that the narrator was " pulling your leg." To hear these two expressions on the lips of attractive and distinguished-looking girls, is to my mind lamentable. And worst of all these expressions actually take the place of wit,— they are delivered with a smile and an air as though the speaker were saying " Now mark, I am going to say something quite new and very amusing indeed. "

And the users of these simulacra of jests appear to consider themselves absolved from trying to think of the combinations of words on their own account.

Then there are people who besides using more salient monstrosities of language are in the habit of interlarding their talk with all sorts of absolutely meaningless tags and odds and ends of expressions, such as " Don't you see ? "—" sort of "—" don't you know ? "—" you know what I mean "—and the like—until the talk of the town in Mayfair and Belgravia largely consists of sentences like this :— " And then, do you see, I said ' no '—sort of very loudly, do you see ? and really sort of meaning it, don't you know what I mean ? And as for him,—well, do you see, he was sort of bothered—you see what I mean, don't you ? " If this is the language we are to talk and to hear, the sooner we take to some form of Wordless Conversation the better.

I believe one reason of these deplorable manifestations is that it is mistakenly impressed upon us, before we are old enough to know better, that words do not signify. " Deeds, not words " we are taught, whereas what we need is Deeds *and* Words. Rudyard Kipling's wonderful allegory of the man of words who had to be killed, contained an eternal truth : he was the man who mattered. Of course words matter supremely. The great deeds that put on immortality do so in the form of words. If the deed is not sung, it perishes, however fine and noble it may be. And the great majority of human beings that we meet as we go through the world, we only know in terms of words ; we don't know what they do, we only know what they say : and

that is how we judge them. We are constantly told to do our best, we are never told to say our best: if we were, the world would be a different and more agreeable place.

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Postscript of 1929 *to "Our Present Vocabulary"*

The above article was written twenty-one years ago. Do we choose our words better to-day? we choose different words certainly, but it may be that some of the strictures which I ventured to make on those of the past still obtain. It is well that we should call the attention of young people especially to these derelictions, since the young presumably hold the future of our vocabulary, as of so much else, in their hands. And since that vocabulary is of necessity determined by the doings of our daily lives, which we recount to one another unceasingly in daily speech, we might expect the terms we use, like the actions they depict, to be inflated, excessive, absurd. As to the young people of to-day, there is no doubt that whatever the statement, whatever the remark made to them, they will be at no loss for an answer. They will instantly, whatever has been said, reply "marvellous!" A great many things that are indeed marvellous have come within our horizon to-day: we hear what people on the other side of the world are saying, we even see their faces, we fly through the air to join them, but unhappily we have no adequate epithets left for these manifestations because we have used them up on the most ordinary

occasions. When a visitor says she likes two lumps of sugar in her tea, or that she does not like any at all, the answer in either case is "marvellous!" It is also the answer if she accepts the suggestion of coming to luncheon, unless indeed it is "how perfectly divine!" Also the words "terrible" and "frightful" that we were wont to use in bygone times when we shook in our shoes with fear, have now become quite domesticated. They find their place comfortably on our writing paper or on our telephone wire in reference to the most ordinary events. "I am so frightfully sorry I can't come"—"I am so terribly glad I can." So also the word "devastating," that we used to apply to an earthquake or an invading army. It need not now mean anything worse than a friend who is not the success of the party.

But even as I write, my eye falls on a leading article in *The Times* headed "Supplementing the Dictionary." Will the Editor, I wonder, who shoulders the heavy task of supplementing the *Oxford English Dictionary*, still give us, contrary to present usage, his former definition of words in use to-day? Will he define "marvellous" for instance, as he did before—"wonderful, astonishing—that which is prodigious or extravagantly improbable"? or will he put instead of it (or add to it) a definition of to-day? "Marvellous: something habitual, obvious, unimportant, something likely to happen at any moment of every day"? It will be interesting to see what the Supplement decides on this question. But whatever the decision, whatever the definition, there is no doubt what the general comment on it will be—"Marvellous!"

A School Inspection in the Nineties

Written in 1894

The writer was privileged on a December day in the nineties to be present in an industrial village at a school inspection conducted by a gentleman who was one of the most favourable specimens possible of his class, urbane, encouraging, and paternal—a welcome contrast, indeed, to the brow-beating, awe-inspiring martinets occasionally to be met with, the terror of nervous schoolmasters.

The first subject taken was that of geography. "Now," said the Inspector, beaming through his spectacles at the assembled class, "I am going to examine Standards two and three in geography. What do you see, my children, when you look out of the window?" This query was received in absolute silence by the class, who were seated in rows on their benches, well below the level of the large window. The writer, who was standing behind the Inspector, mechanically looked out, unconsciously expecting to see some phenomenon bearing directly on the subject under discussion; but all that was to be seen was a muddy village street, and Mrs. Flannagan at her cottage door, dragging a tiny child inside out of the rain, and seating him with some violence on a wooden stool just within the doorway. "Well," said the Inspector blandly, after a pause, "when you look out of the window you see the world, don't you?" The children looked at him dubiously. "Yes, sir,"

said one small boy, evidently not sure whether he were giving the right answer or not. "And what is the world like?" pursued the Inspector. No answer to this comprehensive inquiry.

It might have occurred to some of the scholars from their own experience, if they had been able as suggested to see out of the window, that the world altogether was very much like Mrs. Flannagan's house; and that we were all of us, like her child, constantly being hustled out of the place we wanted to be in, and put somewhere else. "The world is round, isn't it?" he said, persuasively. "Yes, sir." The answer came with alacrity; they felt they might safely commit themselves to this statement. "And how do we know it is round?" he asked. The words "By looking out of the window" visibly trembled on the lips of an anxious child in the front row, but he fortunately said nothing. "Well, now," said the Inspector, taking a penny from his pocket, "I will tell you how we know it is round. You have all of you," he went on, holding the coin between his thumb and forefinger, and presenting its flat side to the class, "held up a penny like this, and noticed the shape of its shadow?" There could be no doubt from his tone what the answer was expected to be, and the children cheerfully and unblushingly replied in the affirmative. "Quite right," he said, approvingly. "The shadow is round, isn't it?" "Yes, sir." "And now you have often held it this way too, I dare say, and noticed what shadow it cast then?"

The scholars had by this time committed themselves to a policy of deceit. They again answered,

Yes, they had done so. "And what shape was that shadow?" asked the Inspector. This was a poser. Dead silence. "It was a straight line, wasn't it?" he asked. "Yes, sir," the boy he was looking at shamelessly replied.

"Now when the earth comes between the sun and the moon, what happens?" he said. The children gaped at him in bewilderment at what evidently appeared to them to be an abrupt and entirely unmotived change of subject. A few minutes before they had turned their minds with relief from the contemplation of the world to that of a penny—considered, it must be confessed, under an unfamiliar aspect, for the shadow of a penny is not usually its strong point in the eyes of a schoolboy—and now they were whirled back into the very middle of the solar system. "I will show you," said the Inspector kindly. And then, holding out his hand, which he clenched as he spoke, he made the following astounding statement: "My fist is a cricket-ball!" By this time the class were prepared to admit anything. "Yes, sir," said one or two, hopelessly accepting the statement without demur against the evidence, and probably thinking what a very desirable kind of fist that must be. Then, with a coruscation of metaphor and illustration, in which cricket-balls and pennies, the sun, moon, and stars, fists and shadows were vertiginously mingled, the Inspector proceeded to demonstrate to them that the earth must be round, a fact which they would have been more than content to accept on the grounds of faith, without being required to follow the chain of evidence,

which in their minds had become so hopelessly entangled.

The lesson on geography was followed by one on grammar, the lesson on grammar by one on reading, and the lesson on reading by one on arithmetic: and all these were conducted on the same system by the excellent Inspector with infinite painstaking and with all the wealth of allegory at his command.

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Postscript of 1929 *to "A School Inspector in the Nineties"*

This absolutely true account of a school inspection a quarter of a century ago is reproduced here as giving a landmark in educational methods, and a point of comparison with the methods of to-day. But whatever the reflections induced by that comparison we need not, perhaps, be unduly anxious. The boys and girls who were at that school, and who at the close of the morning described were doubtless by whatever method confirmed in various received opinions—that the earth is round, that a noun is not the same as a verb, that two and two make four—are now middle-aged men and women, most of them with families of their own, many of them still living in the same surroundings: and they appear to be on the whole as competent and clear-headed in their dealings with life as the average members of any other social community.

It would seem therefore that it does not matter very much by what chain of argument or illustration the youthful mind is convinced, say, that the earth is round. Whether or no that conviction is of any practical use in the subsequent conduct of life must be a matter of opinion and of experience.

Women at the Works—and Elsewhere

Written in 1922

The lives of women of every class have been jarred and shaken from their wonted places during these five disintegrating years, shaken from the well-worn paths in which it had been their custom to tread. They have done many things they did not know they could do, and had never dreamt of doing before. They have been discussed, praised, blamed, written about, until it is small wonder that they themselves do not quite know where they stand in the great series of human achievement. The woman who was well-to-do and had already taken her share in some worthy work for the community went and did something else. The woman who was doing nothing went and did something. The working woman left her own work and did other work needed by the State. They were all of them uplifted, excited, by the novelty of their occupation, by the wonderful sense of unity of impulse, of feeling the national common will behind their action, of having a share in the Great Resolution. In the place of the daily monotonous obligations was one clear duty, and women, universally acclaimed, rushed forward to accomplish it.

The house doors in every direction were opened wide to the gale. In the countless homes from which the husband was absent continuity of intercourse was rudely wrenched asunder. The gradual de-

posit of common interest in home and children, which in every part of the social scale helps even where ardent affection is absent to consolidate existence, was blown to the four quarters of heaven, and women of every class stepped across their thresholds into what was to most of them a freer, wider world. Shut doors may mean imprisonment as well as safety, exclude liberty as well as danger, and there were women for whom the opening of those doors meant sheer emancipation.

For many a working woman, it is true, the wind screen that stood between her and the universe, behind which were accumulated her daily duties, her daily monotonous knowledge of what life was likely to bring, was thrown down ; but even she, after the first moment of bewilderment, in many cases of agonised grief, at the sudden catastrophe, gradually came to realise that life on the whole was easier.

She had not always to be thinking of someone else. She herself was now the person to be first considered, and she gave that consideration fully.

If she had been one of the wives who get up to make their husband a hot breakfast before he goes out in the morning—not all the wives do this—she no longer had to do it. She had not to think what he would like for his meals. She was no longer grumbled at, not to speak of anything more forcible ; and, greatest amelioration of all, she had more money to spend and no one to account to for it. In many houses the children looked better fed and better clothed than before the war ; there was more to give them. For many a devoted wife and mother at the works, whose husband, whose son

was at the war, the entire change of her existence softened the acute poignancy of separation. "My word!" said one of the women to a visitor, "we was wondering, Mrs. Jones and me, what we'd get to talk about when the war was over!" And it was obvious that the speaker, although in deadly anxiety for her son reported missing, felt that life had been fuller, and even—if one dares to say so—more satisfying, since the great upheaval.

The years went on. The war was won. The war is over.

Now is the difficult time. Now must women, the acclaimed, the adventurous, go back into their houses, and piece together as best they may the duties of what is called "ordinary life" scattered by the tornado—some with untold relief, others with courage, many, many with inward revolt.

But almost all are becoming aware in its fullness of the immense mental and physical fatigue that these years have brought, the fatigue disregarded, surmounted at the time, of long days in factory or hospital or other strenuous work—fatigue which is now making itself manifest, as it encounters daily minor readjustments to the needs of the present, as mind and body go jarring heavily along what used to be the accustomed road. And it is in this condition, truly not the most favourable, that we are called upon to help in the great new reconstruction of the nation, in which the part of women will be so potent.

The Nation—what is that? As I try to visualise it, I can represent it to myself in terms only of individual human beings, of the individual lives of

each of us, our own lives and those of our surroundings. That is, then, the task before us, to try to make those lives better. How are we going to do it? Are we all, women of different classes, going to join in a common effort? Are we going with a common lofty object in view to reinforce one another's impulse, or are we embarking on this great task with no definite direction, each of us blindly fumbling along to find out what this new great duty is, and incidentally trying to pick up again the duties we have mislaid during these years?

How much, I wonder, do women of different walks in life, of different outlook, and especially of different enjoyments, understand one another? Those to whom has been vouchsafed the privilege of motherhood no doubt have a great common experience, although even that may present widely different aspects according to the circumstances of the mother. But apart from this, a subject too vast to be entered upon here, how much do they really understand about each other?

The working class have always known a very great deal about the well-to-do; many of them have been in domestic service themselves, or have associated with domestics, and the domestic class obviously have a very intimate knowledge of the daily life of their employers. The employer has not always the same intimate knowledge of the daily life of the woman at the works; although most of the well-to-do now know a great deal more about the working class than they did before. Public opinion indeed requires them to do so. From pre-war days onward there has been a steady

course of investigation into the home lives and the conditions of the working classes ; and no doubt if we want these conditions altered and improved it is well that we should discuss them. We read about them and talk about them, and tabulate what qualities are needed to make those lives satisfactory or unsatisfactory, until their vices and virtues seem to have become a sort of standard currency of ethics ; and especially as regards the women.

Is it by the same code of ethics that the lives of the well-to-do women are governed ? We no doubt suppose them to be. But is it indeed the same code —or is it quite different ? This question is not so easy to answer.

Space forbids me to include in this article as I had hoped to do descriptions of some houses at the works, and of the daily life of the women who live in them. It is only possible in the limits of these pages to consider in general what that life is, and how it compares with the lives of women in a different station.

In a book entitled *At the Works*, published in 1907, reissued in 1911, an attempt was made to give a brief account of the lives, work, and general conditions of existence of a large population of ironworkers on the banks of the Tees. A part of this book was devoted to describing the lives of the wives and daughters of ironworkers, the conditions of whose existence remained pretty much the same during the thirty odd years, say, preceding the war, during most of which the data on which the book was founded were collected.

They were living in the midst of an ever-growing

population of workers, whose chief industry, the making of iron and steel, offered no place for women, while the influx of male workers gradually increased. The result was naturally a community with many more men than women, in which the young girls, eagerly sought, were most of them married when they were young and inexperienced, each in her turn handing on her inexperience to the next generation. Those who have been visiting the working women of this locality during these thirty odd years, in which the young girls have turned into mothers and grandmothers, have seen the same story repeated over and over again. The crowds of young single men coming to the works, lodging very uncomfortably with one family and another, were glad to marry early and to set up a house of their own. Then perhaps followed a time of brief romance which tempered the shortcomings of the youthful wife as a housekeeper. Then came babies, and toil, and struggle. The years passed and the children grew up, and that mother, too, took lodgers, and her daughter in her turn married young, and all went on as before, since the women on the whole had not altered or improved—and the women matter very, very much.

Amid all the colossal transmutations of the community, of its social strata, its material conditions, one fact remains the same. I venture to quote a statement written in 1907, which I believe to be as true to-day as it undoubtedly was then :

" The key, the clue to the condition of the man at the works and his family, to the possibilities and

impossibilities of his existence, is the woman who manages his house. Her character, her capacity, and, most of all, her health, on which her nerves and temper depend, will determine the course of his life."

That is what it really comes to in the case of a married man. If he is a satisfactory member of the community, if he has qualities necessary to make a success of life and his calling, and if his wife happens fortunately to reinforce his good qualities with her own, that household is likely to prosper. If, on the other hand, instead of reinforcing those qualities the unsatisfactory wife has precisely the defects which neutralise them, that couple, given their other handicaps in the race, will have but a poor chance of making the best of their lives.

The working woman has many handicaps, and one of them is that there are only a certain number of approved good qualities for her to choose from. She is not allowed, like her well-to-do sisters, to justify her existence in all kinds of varying ways ; if she does not happen to have one desirable quality, putting forward another, or, better still, replacing the deficiency by finding that same quality, and employing it, in someone else. For in the case of the well-to-do the subjects set them by Destiny to " take up," so to speak, are many and varied, and are most of them optional. The girl who has no need to earn her living, who, after a leisured, comfortable, irresponsible girlhood, marries under conditions which enable her to employ other people to carry on the work of her life for her, may choose

which of her natural bents she will follow, or, more likely still, will follow it automatically without consciously choosing it. And no one will brand her, or contemn her, or write statistics about her if she happens to lack certain qualities which in another walk of life are recognised and tabulated as being essential.

The working woman, whatever her natural bent and aptitudes, has no possibility of choosing. If she wishes to succeed there is only one subject which she may take up. She must be a skilled housewife. And in this capacity she is incessantly called upon to satisfy the examiners, who are in this case the whole community, inquiring into what she does with her life. She cannot escape from the searchlight of investigation for ever playing upon her, and must unavoidably display the reply to the demands on her from all and sundry, for it is always there accusing or justifying her. It is her House. She cannot hide it. Her house testifies whether she is of clean habits or the reverse, whether she is tidy or a slattern, whether she does her cooking at home or buys her food outside, whether her children are well cared for or neglected ; and she will be judged or condemned accordingly, without being allowed to appeal to some other set of endearing qualities which if she were better off would equally justify her existence.

There are many competent working women who are able to pass this test most successfully ; and this fact is occasionally held by those who generalise from the satisfactory working-class homes rather than from the unsatisfactory to prove that it is

not the conditions of their lives that are amiss, but the blameworthy inadequacy of those who interpret them. But this view may not be entirely accurate. The varying results of these conditions simply show that all women are not able to carry the same weight. It is obvious that metaphorically as well as literally there are fewer women who can carry a heavy burden single-handed than who can carry it with the assistance of several others.

It is interesting to reflect that there are many women among the well-to-do who become at intervals so worn out by the household duties they have to perform vicariously that in order to avert a nervous breakdown they have to go away for a change, to a hotel perhaps, or to a friend's house. And they tell you that what has done them most good, and promoted their recovery most of all, is being dispensed from ordering the dinner. But it seems a little surprising, if it is so exhausting merely to think of what one is going to eat, to tell someone else to buy it, and someone else to cook it, and yet someone else to put it on the table, that the working woman does not oftener break down—she does occasionally—at having not only to think of the food, but to buy it herself, cook it herself, and also to dish it up. She has indeed with her own hands to do every single thing necessary to carry on existence. If she has children, there comes a time when they can help her ; but before that time comes they have added very heavily to her burden during the years of their birth and infancy.

But the curious thing is that the more fortunate, looking on at the strenuous existence of the working

woman, seem to take this great effort for granted ; and that while she goes struggling along with her load, stumbling sometimes, letting it slip often, dropping parts of it altogether, even the kindly among her more prosperous sisters, passing her on the road with her own helpers and called upon to bear but a fraction of her load, will feel and look disapproval at the working woman for not being able to carry it all single-handed. " I went into Mrs. Smith's house," a well-disposed visitor will say with a sigh ; " what a slatternly woman ! Her breakfast cups were not washed up at noon." And the deduction from those unwashed cups is probably true: it is more than likely that Mrs. Smith has the temperament of the slattern. It is possible, however, that the kindly visitor may have that temperament herself. But she has not had the opportunity of finding it out, as when she has done her breakfast someone else comes into the room and takes away the things and washes them up. The derelictions from duty, as well as the virtues of the working woman, are so terribly visible, for she cannot drape them or hide their results. The well-to-do woman need not show them at all. I might go a dozen times into the house of a dweller in Park Lane, say, without discovering that she is a slattern. That word, indeed, I never remember hearing applied to the well-to-do. How could it be ? Mrs. Park Lane has on good clothes, none of her hooks and buttons are off, or her gown fastened across with a pin ; her dining-room is in perfect order awaiting her presence at the next meal.

The house of the well-to-do woman is no doubt

also a revelation, a betrayal; but of taste, or of tastes, more than of character. If her house is tidy, it need not mean that she is tidy herself. If it is untidy, or if it is not kept clean, her duty is not to clean it herself, but to scold someone else; to scold her nurse if her children are not washed and dressed, or the cook if the dinner is not ready in time; or to tell the cook to scold someone else, in her turn, if the things are not washed up after a meal. If Mrs. Park Lane does all this, she will be a good housewife. That word is applied in the more favoured class to the woman who with keen observation, accompanied by the art of timely reprimand, can steer her household aright. This housewife gives good dinners instead of bad ones; that is, she knows how to choose what people like to eat. She knows whether the dinner is well or ill-cooked. And if she has a good cook, and if she is sympathetic in manner and a pleasant talker, people will like her, speak well of her, and also of her dinners; and they will be a success, and she will be a success. But it will avail nothing to the working woman if she cannot herself cook, and if her house has not been properly swept, that she should be able to talk well or be popular with her friends. On the contrary, if her chief contribution to the amenities of life is to stand in her doorway engaged in conversation with her neighbours, she will be criticised for indulging in "front door gossip."

But do not the well-to-do gossip with their neighbours? They do not stand at their street door to do so, as they have drawing-rooms in which

to receive them and leisure to talk, but they gossip as much and more. Why should they wish the working woman to stand at her back door only, which commonly opens on to a narrower street than the front door, and of which the surroundings are apt to be less sanitary? What would the dweller in a fashionable West-End square or street say if she were walled up in her house and permitted egress only into the mews behind? We hear so much in these well-informed days about the recreation and the leisure of the working classes. We are ready to build places for them and to provide entertainment. But the accessible and popular form of entertainment, of intercourse with their neighbours, that the better-off in a town so constantly enjoy—I imagine there are few days when the well-to-do do not frequent some friend or acquaintance outside the family circle—for the working woman is disapproved. But why should there be a different code in this respect for her and for us, and in many other respects?

I do not hold a brief for the working woman or for the woman who is well-to-do. There are many praiseworthy as well as many deplorable persons to be found in both these sections of society. It is a temptation, I know, for those who are justifiably roused to fury at the contemplation of the flagrant inequalities of destiny to picture the working woman as being invariably the potential possessor of all the virtues, which her destiny, and the arrogance of her employers, have prevented her from developing. But this attitude may carry us too far. For if it is straitened means only that

make her so often fall short of the ideal of womanhood, how is it, then, that so many wealthy women fall short of it too? That shows that it is not straitened means only that make the undesirable. It is straitened means in combination with certain undesirable qualities of character, found no doubt in every direction.

What, then, are these qualities? What are the desirable and undesirable qualities for woman? and are they the same for every class?

Most of us suddenly confronted with this last question would no doubt reply in haste in the affirmative, imagining we are speaking the truth. But would it be the truth? Let us try to make it clear to our minds, those of us who, helped by material means, have the constant opportunity of storing our minds with the more precious currency of art and literature: we who are the articulate, and who ought, when we are trying so hard to Reconstruct, to know what we are prescribing, and what we are talking about. Let us try to compare the ordinances of life for women leading different existences, and to see what we are demanding from ourselves and from others, and by what code we are in reality living.

Is it a spiritual code, enjoined on us by the form of religion which we profess, or is it a lofty moral code of no special creed? or is it a code of expediency only, of Western expediency, formulated on the whole by the employing classes, but certainly making for the general convenience?

Would it not be well to determine this in our heart and conscience before we go further? We

should all of us like to believe that our code is the same as that of the worker. But the preceding pages have, I think, shown that it is not. The woman of means, if she possesses by proxy only the qualities most conspicuously desirable in the working woman, is considered to possess them herself, and commended by public opinion accordingly.

And if we go further in investigation, shall we not find that many inborn tendencies looked upon as defects in the working woman are not considered defects in the well-to-do? We are many of us in these abysmal days trying, with minds much perplexed, to find the right path of conduct. Let us, speaking for the sake of clarity of the woman of means as Lady A and the working woman as Mrs. A, try to be sure whether for these two, in certain fields of action, such as gambling, spending on clothes, indulging in drink even, the right path is the same. As to gambling, for instance: I am not attempting to discuss here the wide subject of the ethics of gambling, which appear at the present time somewhat confused. I am only discussing its practical effect on the community.

Mrs. A, for example, has the temperament of the gambler; so has Lady A. The latter is conveniently situated for gratifying it. She can have her friends in to play bridge, for money, in her own house at any time of day she chooses. And she does choose; she plays from tea-time, or even from lunch-time, till she goes to bed; and though this course is disapproved of by many women in society leading more worthy lives, no one calls on Lady A to remonstrate with her and

tell her she must really desist. Mrs. A, on the other hand, does not often gamble with cards. She goes to a whist drive now and again, at which, by a nice distinction, she may not play for money, but may play for a prize. She does not commonly play cards in her own house. Probably if she were found playing for money with friends assembled in her kitchen she would be severely reprimanded. She, therefore, not having the outlet of cards, bets on races. This is more easily accomplished, and is fraught with a weekly excitement when the news comes of the results. Those of us who have seen homes where children are neglected and rooms stripped when luck has gone against the dwellers, have felt heartsick at the tendencies which have brought about such consequences, and desperate at the thought that we were not able to stop them. And yet some of us have also seen houses where there has been a sudden accession of joyful possession from such illicit gains, a new cloak proudly displayed by the wearer, or, more disarming still, some new toys—and the words of remonstrance, at any time difficult to utter, have died on our lips.

We need have none of these soul searchings so far as our hortatory dealings with Lady A are concerned. She has been to Ascot, with beautiful new clothes ; she has betted continuously. You meet her at dinner afterwards, and she relates with vivacity and charm, usually in the hearing of the servants, how much she has won or lost. But, in either case, no one seems to consider she is to be reprobated and none of us need worry as to whether it is our duty to remonstrate with her.

Mrs. D, who worked, and most efficiently, at munitions for many hours a day during the war, and who, in common with women of all kinds, has been in the habit of gazing into shop-windows, suddenly found herself with the wonderful new possibility within her grasp, not only of looking but of buying. She bought a fur coat. She had never had one before, and the joy of walking about in it must for the moment have been the very crown of existence. It was extravagant of her, no doubt it was foolish. But she bought a fierce rampant joy with it all the same. What about Lady F? She has worn a fur coat, when the weather was cold enough, ever since she grew up. But, all the same, does not she look into shop-windows—and go in at the shop door? In 1917, at the very height of the war, a well-known house of business in the West End followed its usual custom of sending round circulars to its clients and announcing a display of fashionable clothing worn by *mannequins*, i.e. young women who processed past, for which show numbered and reserved seats could be obtained by payment. At the time these circulars were being issued, there was much disapproving talk about the young women working in war factories, who with their means suddenly doubled and trebled were buying effective clothes, and even jewellery, worst of all, for the first time in their lives. It is not every one of us who, having a sudden windfall, puts all of it at once into Government funds instead of expending it on some " treat " not dictated by wisdom.

Mrs. G causes scandal because she drinks, a

fact that cannot be concealed from the world, because, when she is intoxicated, she quarrels violently with her neighbours on either side and advertises her condition by open conflict. Lady G, who has, alas ! the same failing, does not bring it so openly to the knowledge of the public. But she has it all the same.

Can we bear, those of us who are thrown with the workers, who are trying to understand, longing to solve some of the great riddles, to exhort those we visit to abstain from derelictions which we know that many of our own walk of life indulge in with impunity ? We ought not to bear it. We ought to feel that those derelictions, if they are reprobated in any direction, should be reprobated in all. But how is it to be done ? Who is going to do it ? Who are the " visitors " who will penetrate into the abodes of the erring well-to-do and exhort them to behave differently ? Not presumably the District Visitor or the Lay Reader, or the Almoner, so potent in the parish, since they may possibly not be invited to the brilliant houses where examples are conspicuously being set by those whose doings are daily chronicled in the papers. The thing at the root of all these regrettable manifestations is that there is too much leisure in some of these well-to-do lives ; to tell the truth, there is little else. It is the custom when the expression " Idle Rich " is used for those people of means who are not idle (and there are, happily, more of these, I fancy, than of the others) to rise in their wrath and protest. But at the same time we all of us know that there are many, many wealthy women who are

idle. They are idle obviously because they have nothing to do. *They have nothing to do.* That is the root of the matter. But at the same time it must be admitted that it is much more difficult for many of them who have no special aptitudes, and no occupation indicated by circumstances, to find worthy occupation for their time, than for the woman who is obliged by circumstances to work constantly at carrying on her daily life, to work at things that if she did not do them would be left undone.

There is many a working woman who, if she were in the position of the dashing Lady X, whose portrait is in the papers, and who never does anything at all that is worth doing, would do neither more nor less than that renowned beauty. Mrs. X has been saved from that fate—or debarred from it—by having something quite obvious to occupy her, and not by being more deserving of approval than the other. The real difficulty that has to be faced in readjusting the situation is, how is Lady X to find something to do? Let us be quite honest, those of us who are fortunate enough to have either work or hobbies to interest us, and who are apt to deplore the spectacle of these highly-placed Unemployed. Is it always so easy for them to find employment? Lady X, living in London, is a young married woman of means and position. She has not been given by nature any special bent that may fill up her time, and, more important still, her thoughts. She does not make music, or draw, or paint, or write, or study. She is not inclined towards what is nowadays called social work. There is nothing particular that she wants to do, or can do, except

play bridge or amuse herself in various, sometimes unedifying, ways. I repeat, I am not defending this lady. But I do think that in many cases she is not, as we are apt to think, compact of all the undesirabilities. Only she is at a loose end, a terribly loose end ; and if she was one of those who found occupation during the war and worked during that time as she had never worked before in her life, she would feel her present plight the more keenly.

But whether she drifted during the war, or worked during the war, she must not go on drifting now. It is supremely important that she should not. It is she who stands in the eyes of the workers for what used to be called the upper classes. If ever there was a time when the right example should be set, when the right turning should be taken, it is now. Who is going to convince her of this ? Who is going to convince the unconvinced, the indifferent, that flagrant idleness, extravagance, worldliness shown in the limelight, must justifiably arouse the surging resentment of those who are looking on ? Who is going to cry " *Casse-cou !* " as in the games of our youth, to those who are drifting, drifting, until they will go over the rapids into the whirlpool ? Whose influence will bring about a reform ? It will only, I believe, be brought about, in the case of Lady X and her companions, by some of themselves. It is from them that the new spirit of example must come, from among the fashionable young women between twenty-five and thirty-five, say, who are entirely indifferent to the opinions of women not of their own kind whether quadragenarians or sexagenarians, and however highly placed in the social scale.

"Us is you and you is Us," said a Yorkshire working woman the other day to a gentlewoman who was standing beside her in a shop, and who had just declined to buy some grapes because of the price. "Us is you, and you is Us, nowadays!" and she proceeded gleefully to buy three bunches of the grapes for herself.

Yes. Us is going to be You in many respects, no doubt; and it is better that Us should grasp that fact quite clearly as soon as we can.

But it is not money only which will matter: though it will matter a great deal in the gradual transfusion, the infiltration of Us into You which has already begun, the gradual removal of the barriers, of the lines of demarcation even. That transfusion must be effected by women of every kind coming nearer to one another, trying to understand—and where they understand, to forgive—drawing near together in their common experience of motherhood, finding out their great underlying affinities often obscured by the trivial shibboleths of social custom. The woman at the works has the right to demand that those other women who are better off, who have up to now been privileged, been advantaged, should in this moment throbbing with possibility show that they are worthy to take their place in the great advance, that they are waking to their heavy responsibility, that they will forgo the endless pursuit of sheer amusement, and that they will set the example of self-control, a quality at the present time conspicuously lacking in women of every station.

And if the women of means play their part—as

Heaven send they may—and lend a hand in the great readjustment instead of looking on, they have a right to expect from the working woman that she should meet them half-way, the right to hope that she will respond, that she will trust them if they are worthy of trust.

Was there ever a time so charged with fate? was there ever a work so great to which old and young alike have been called? It is a work in which all may help, all must help: a work that brooks no delay.

Let us do that work while there is still time. Let us take the right turning before we arrive at the precipice.

Some Thoughts on Old Age

Many people have written about old age. It has been written about by the young, by the middle-aged, by the old. It is chiefly these last who know what they are writing about.

Old age may be a time of wonder and privilege to those who have lived aright; and when they have so found it, it is their duty to tell those who follow them what this time may really be like. The writer remembers seeing the light which came into the face of a young girl when she was told that life grew more beautiful as it went on. "I was never told that before," she said. "Why isn't it said oftener?" and the recollection of that eager young voice arraigning her elders, demanding reassurance for the future, is an incitement to put into words once more what more old people than we are apt to imagine would be ready to say if they looked deep into their hearts and spoke the truth about what they found there. Old age, granted that we have been fortunate enough to preserve a measure of mental and physical health, would be the most wonderful time of all, if—and it is a supreme If—it were not for the certain knowledge that it is bringing us to the end. And this need be said with no fear of the end, but with the regret of one who, looking on at a great drama, sighs as the last curtain comes down to think it is all over.

There are inevitable limitations in old age; but they may be compensated by other widenings. Old

people cannot see or hear as well as they used, but they perhaps hear more clearly the inward comments of wisdom and experience, they may see more truly through the trappings of circumstance. It must not be claimed for them of course that they are invariably wise, or that they never make mistakes. People are not infallible because they happen to be at any given time of life : they are not infallible because they are young, or because they are middle-aged, or even because they are old. And the old do not always " know best," as some of them, it must be admitted, are apt to contend.

But one thing the old do know which is unknown either to the young or the middle-aged. They know what it is like to be old. They have taken a longer course of life and studied it more thoroughly : they have more points of comparison therefore and probably a juster sense of values : they have been able to take the average of conduct over a larger number of instances. It is obvious that it is more difficult for the old to assimilate new ideas than it is for the young, as there is less room for new opinions in minds crowded with the accumulations of a lifetime. But those of us who are wise will eject some of our worn-out opinions to make room for some which are new : and this process of sorting, readjusting, and stocktaking renews the zest of life.

Many of us no doubt will still cling to tonality in music, to perspective in drawing, to style in literature, and will find therein a continued solace in the emptier years. But we need not therefore brand as knaves and as fools those who have rejected the

banisters of Form. For we know in our hearts that undreamt-of innovations in art and literature at any time have from their very strangeness something stirring, inciting for us, as they had when we too on the threshold of life waved our banners and went forth to greet the arts and music of the future. The Future,—the Present,—the Past,—how glib we are with those words! and they all mean the same. The seeming differences between them are in ourselves, in the place from whence we look at them as the Future slides stealthily into the Present and then into the Past.

Let us not forget, we of the many memories, what we too saw as life unfolded before us. For if we remember we shall understand, even when we are old, what it is like to be setting out for that glorious adventure, the Quest of Life.

We ourselves are no longer setting out; but to those of us who hold our light aloft, life can show adventure still. We watch from the strand, we cheer, we warn—"Take care!" we cry—"those shoals—that reef!" but who cares for warnings? and eagerly the seekers go on. Yet it may be that when they see our light they will come back to tell us how they have fared . . . well for us if they do. Alas for those of us who are not told, who have lost contact with the young! they will never know that precious gift, the uplifting rejuvenation of the spirit brought about by the companionship of youth.

Happy are they who know what that companionship may mean—happy are they who, advancing through the years, are escorted by their children and their children's children towards the Great Exit.

PART II

PERSONAL APPRECIATIONS

Coquelin

Written in 1910

Those who are in real touch with some beloved art, even if they be only onlookers at it, must have known some of those Heaven-sent, privileged moments in which they have not only seen the Best, but have instantly recognised it—and by that recognition have been armoured against the danger that lies in wait for us all, of contentedly accepting the second-rate.

As far as the art of acting is concerned—and those who are not interested in that art need proceed no further with the following pages—there is no reason in these days why we should any of us yield to that deplorable acceptance. We have had, at intervals at any rate, the chance of being shown what acting can be at its highest: and those of us whose play-going experiences coincide with the later decades of the nineteenth century have had the opportunity of seeing one of the greatest examples of all. The art of Coquelin at his best was a standard of acting, a point of comparison to those who saw him, for the rest of their lives. Art it was, there was no doubt: the conscious, highly-finished, deliberate art of a man with the great French traditions of the stage behind him, an art which he had perfected through early years of determination and toil, and in the long years of unbounded success that followed. His extraordinary natural gifts were reinforced by consummate knowledge, by deliberate intention.

He always had, and always gave, a sense, both on the stage and off, of the absolute certainty with which he handled his resources, never trusting to the inspiration of the moment, never at the mercy of an impulse or a mood. It was by his art he convinced the listener, it was not by simple native sincerity ; but the result was the same.

Diderot's thesis, that the primary quality of an actor is that he should be able to stand outside his part, observe it dispassionately, and handle it with deliberate control, was an article of faith with Coquelin. He, too, believed that to feel real emotion on the stage was a fatal drawback to the actor ; that the man who did so had not all his resources in hand, and did not know whither he might be led. As Diderot has it, " the actor should be a cool and calm spectator of human nature ; in handling it he should have infinite fineness of perception, but no sentimentality—that is, he should have that art of imitating everything which will give him an equal aptitude for every kind of part. For if an actor surrenders himself to the emotion of the moment, it is impossible for him to play the same part ten times with the same warmth and the same success ; fiery and convincing at the first performance, he will be played out and as cold as marble by the time he comes to the third ; whereas, if remaining calm himself, his imitation of nature, founded on close observation, is deliberate and intentional. He will compose an imitation of which he will be absolutely certain, and by the tenth time he plays it, far from having exhausted his emotion, his acting will be strengthened by his experience

of the part and will be more and more successful." All this was constantly paraphrased in speech by Coquelin off the stage, and put into practice on it.

In support of this theory, he would tell how, on one occasion, in a performance of *L'Aîné*, at the moment where he had to fall by his brother's bedside in floods of tears with his head in his hands, he was in reality overcome by emotion, and did subside into tears, to the great detriment of the scene. He was entirely thereby thrown off his balance and did not recover himself during the rest of the act.

He would also relate the history of another mishap —this time, however, based upon no theory—that might have had dire results. In a play in which he had to feign a drunken sleep in order to overhear what two of the other characters were saying, Coquelin actually did, being very tired, go to sleep for a moment. Then he woke with a start—mercifully in time!—but not sure for one instant of bewildered anxiety whether he had missed his cue or not. This incident, of course, is beside the mark in the discussion of Diderot's view, for even the most fanatic partisan of the theory " qu'il faut jouer d'âme " would not contend that it is desirable really to go to sleep on the stage, even when the part demands it.

Coquelin was always ready to descant upon his theories. His friends and acquaintances will never forget how he would take the stage in a drawing room as effectively as he did in the theatre, " pérorant," as he would himself have said, to the enthralled circle round him, and giving point and effect by his exquisite diction to every syllable that

he uttered. Whatever the verbal missile used by Coquelin, it was handled and directed with an unerring skill which sent it straight home to the mark, a skill which made his hearers realise how very little attention we pay in this country to diction and delivery in every-day speech, and how we mostly content ourselves with turning out a few mumbled words into the universe to shift for themselves with no adventitious aids to their effect. To hit the mark in talk, as in everything else, it is not only the missile which is necessary, but the way of directing it which is of importance ; and the axiom that it is more effective to say the wrong words in the right way than the right words in the wrong way, is true of conversation as well as of the stage.

Coquelin was extraordinarily interesting to watch on such occasions, as he sat or stood in the midst of a circle, and talked, as the popular saying has it, as if he liked the sound of his own voice. Small wonder if he did—for there were few voices in the world like it, and it was a liking which was shared by his listeners. His appearance was familiar to most playgoers. A man of middle height, with no native nobility of aspect, with keen, rather small eyes, with overhanging eyebrows of which he made most effective use ; abundant hair, which by a rapid touch he could make as expressive as the rest of his equipment ; a thick, broad nose ; a long upper lip ; a mouth that shut tightly with hard, determined lines in it. This was the appearance of the man who seemed to be by nature destined to play comedy parts. But to do that only would not have satisfied him. He compelled his personality

to assume not only comedy, but tragedy, sentiment, nobility. I would almost venture to say that a man of Coquelin's personality, given his supreme gift, would be more likely to aim at, and achieve, a wider range than one of more distinguished and romantic aspect. For the latter, although he might play low comedy parts as a *tour de force*, would probably not be very anxious to identify himself with farce; while the man who could play the buffoon superbly would no doubt be desirous of achieving gallant and romantic parts as well.

Coquelin alone was able to play all parts, and did play them all. He could assume the flamboyant dignity of the swashbuckler, and the more discreet dignity of the hero who wears a frock-coat.

When *Chamillac* was produced in London in 1887, in which he played a man of honour weighed down, dragged back by his former misdoings and finally making a confession of them, one of the newspaper critics said of him, and with truth, that Coquelin had "draped himself in distinction as in a garment."

In *La Dame aux Camélias*, in which he played the small part of the father, making it stand out in the way that a great actor does make a small part stand out beyond the others, he played the scene in which the father persuades Marguerite to give up his son with a reserve, a dignity, a rectitude which carried the scene, and even made sympathetic the somewhat mean-spirited virtue of the father, a personage of whom Coquelin himself said "Il joue un bien triste rôle, ce monsieur."

Space forbids our even attempting to dwell on

the numerous and more important parts in which Coquelin achieved brilliant success, whether in the classical pieces of the Repertory or the large number of modern plays, of which the record is a testimony to his wide range and infinite variety of interpretation.

But there was no doubt—or so at least it seemed to the spectator—that it was not the black-coated parts that were most congenial to him. He revelled in the swaggering transfiguration of costume, and his audience revelled with him as they looked on.

In *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the very apotheosis of splendid swagger, he played as one whose very soul was possessed by the spirit of the glorious and untranslateable "Panache," the glittering, the copious, the gallant, the absurd. He played *Cyrano* all over the world, never failing in it, never losing hold. The inevitable danger of repeating a performance too many times, over-accentuation, is apt to be still further intensified by playing to audiences who may not always understand the language of the actors. There is always a tendency noticeable in actors on their return from foreign tours, towards trying unduly to eke out their meaning by exaggerated action and emphasis, and even Coquelin was not at times entirely free from it. But *Cyrano* was a play that could afford to be accentuated, that could hardly be affected by over-emphasis. And the like impunity attended that other play, the immortal, which Coquelin had acted for still longer than *Cyrano*, the play which Molière must surely have taught him himself, *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, in which Coquelin's

Mascarille stands unrivalled and unapproached in the interpretations of the stage. Here is swagger also, but of another kind, low-born, uproarious swagger with no note of distinction, real, rollicking buffoonery which will remain an indelible memory in the minds of those who were fortunate enough to see it. As one recalls it, one can still hear the sound of that rich, resonant voice before he came on to the stage at the beginning, crying " La, la, la ! " to his bearers as the sedan-chair was carried in. One can see Mascarille seated between the two adoring ladies and lying back in his chair, with his immense moustaches, his curls, his hat and feathers, his gay attire ; one sees the superb air with which he displayed his clothes, the royal insolence with which he flung his scented glove under the nose of Polyxène, *alias* Madelon, his shameless joy in the whole jest, as he piled it up to see how much his companions would stand. This performance was the very summit of Coquelin's art—a performance which through all the years he had played it never grew stale, and which he played in London a year ago with the same inextinguishable " verve " with which he had played it at the beginning. And here again his theories of the deliberate standing outside a part and building it up were justified : every word, every action of that part, that looked so full of spontaneous uncontrolled hilarity was studied, calculated, certain ; every word, every action was the same when he played it thirty years ago as it was when he played at the end.

At all times, whether in classical or modern plays, whether on the stage or off, Coquelin's gesticulation

was most characteristic and instructive. In talk he was curiously sparing of it, but when it came it was inimitably expressive. He used his hands with the rapid instinctive movements of the man to whom action is part of his natural means of expression, and whose gestures on the stage, therefore, are natural and convincing ; different indeed from the acquired overladen gestures used on the English stage by people to whom they are obviously artificial and unaccustomed. The action of Coquelin's hands, and above all, the play of his wonderful mobile face, made of the most trifling anecdote that he told a drama in miniature.

Those who saw him in *Le Colonel Roquebrune*, which he was playing in Paris in 1897, will never forget one scene especially in which, with absolutely no change of make-up, Coquelin managed by purely facial expression to achieve one of the most remarkable transitions ever seen on the stage. If my memory serves me, Colonel Roquebrune, a distinguished officer of Napoleon's, is carousing, in the character of a boon companion, in a tavern under an assumed name with some of the enemy, whom he detains in talk until the time comes when he may reveal himself. When that moment came, Coquelin, standing up calmly, said, " Oui, Messieurs, je suis le Colonel Roquebrune "—and the whole aspect of the man altered. He was changed, he was someone else ; the low vulgar lines went out of his face, dignity and distinction came into it instead. It was a man of authority who stood there in the place of the reveller.

At other times he would transform his

physiognomy suddenly with a twist of his hair or a clutch at his coat. One of the most effective things he ever did of this kind was in the second act of *Les Surprises du Divorce*, as the husband who, having divorced his wife because he could not bear her mother, a widow, finds when he is married again (to the daughter of a widower this time) that the said widow has married his new father-in-law. As this lady, for the second time an inmate of his home, walked into his drawing-room on one side of the stage, Coquelin, coming in at the other, stood transfixed, a picture of absolute helpless terror, his face livid, his hair actually on end. How was this achieved? One of the most acute critics of the English stage has recorded that this is one of the most remarkable instances of an actor having the possibility of turning pale at will!—on this occasion, however, the achievement was more sleight of hand than anything else. When Coquelin was subsequently asked how it was done, he said in reply with a smile, that it was very simple. At the moment he comes on in that scene, his face is not turned to the spectators, and their attention, besides, is directed to the mother-in-law who dances in, humming a song that the first wife used to sing—upon which Coquelin, having come in with his face already floured, painted and made up to represent extreme terror, suddenly turns round facing the audience with a cry of dismay, and as he does so throws up his hands, giving a rapid and imperceptible twist to his thick hair and making it stand upright. As he ended this explanation he said with a twinkle in his eye, "ce n'est pas plus malin que ça."

It evidently amused him to talk of his calling, to answer the questions of people who had never been behind the curtain. He would describe, for instance, how when he sat down and had a meal on the stage, everything on the table was so placed that in reaching it his action was visible ; thus, when he was sitting at a square table and was going to help himself to salt, the salt-cellar would be at the corner of the table farthest from him, so that when he helped himself, the audience saw his right arm going across to the left-hand corner ; in the same way, a bottle that he would take with his left hand would be put on his right. And so on, in regard to a mass of details, apparently unimportant, of which the spectators would be quite unconscious, but which produced an extraordinary and convincing effect of completeness. " Remember," he would say when discussing either the staging or the construction of a play, " that you must make it absolutely and absurdly clear what it is you wish to convey—and remember also that in order to produce the illusion of reality you have to behave on the stage in a manner which is unreal." " Le public," he used to say with a gesture familiar to him, closing the forefinger and thumb of his right hand and with it accentuating what he said, " Le public est un sot qui ne comprend pas à demi-mot."

I remember hearing him upon one occasion complacently telling anecdotes of his presence of mind when some " property " essential to the scene had been forgotten. In the *Aiglon* he played the part of an old soldier of the Vieille Garde who brings secretly to the captive Duke of Reichstadt

some toy soldiers, painted to represent the Imperial army, tied up in a foulard. When he had come on to the stage to do this, he suddenly found that he had forgotten the foulard with the soldiers, which the whole of the next scene turned upon. He wheeled round to one of the subordinate characters personating another soldier, who was standing behind him, and improvised a scene with which he began scolding the man, pushing him back and telling him to get out of earshot—and as he pushed him backwards, the audience not distinguishing what he was saying, he was muttering more and more furiously the whole time, " Je n'ai pas mon foulard ! Je n'ai pas mon foulard ! "—until finally he got him out of the door and with interjected ejaculations filled in the time until the man, having understood, reappeared with the foulard. Then Coquelin took it from him so quietly that no one noticed what had happened. On another occasion he was playing a modern comedy in which he had to pay a call. While waiting in the drawing-room for the hostess to come, he suddenly found he had forgotten the book which he was supposed to be bringing back to her and on which two pages of dialogue turned. So he cried out, " I won't wait any longer ! " and burst out through the folding doors at the back, leaving the stage vacant, to burst in through them again in another minute—the book safe in his pocket—saying, " Eh bien, non je reste ! "—" Oh yes," he would say with a satisfied air when recounting these stories, " it is very difficult to trip *me* up on the stage, I can tell you." Some one once asked him which of the directions " côté cour " and

" côté jardin " meant the right side of the stage and which the left. He professed to have forgotten. " Tout ce que je puis vous dire," he added with a fatuous smile, " c'est que le côté où j'entre, moi, c'est toujours le bon côté."

In the summer of 1908 he was the guest of the Stage Society, at a dinner given by them in London. For many of the diners it was the last time they saw him, and it was Coquelin, under one aspect, at his best.

Those who were present will not easily forget the moment when, after a good deal of the variegated after-dinner oratory from one person and another, more or less effective, that characterises such occasions, Coquelin finally rose, amid thunders of applause, to reply. He stood there, grave, pale, quiet, holding the paper from which he was going to read his speech in his hand. And then in the dead silence that followed, the measured, well-balanced sentences fell with perfection of enunciation and effect, as he besought his hearers, members of what he considered a dangerously innovating dramatic society, to pause and see whither they were going.

" I find myself in a difficult position to-night," he said. " I cannot pretend that I am in sympathy with the path you are attempting to tread. Je suis de la vieille garde, moi—je suis un vieux classique. Croyez-moi, Messieurs et Mesdames, vous faites fausse route. I belong," he went on, " to those who believe in the traditions of the stage, and in its illusions. I do not believe in dragging to the light the sordid ugliness of these days, and in depressing

the hearer and sending him away miserable, nor in representing details fit only for the consulting room. " Ce n'est pas du théâtre que vous faites là," he said ; " c'est de la clinique." And many of his hearers agreed with him. He always kept absolutely aloof from the view which some of us hold with such passionate conviction in these days that the stage is the place of all others from which to teach as well as to divert. It is the eternal story-book, the eternal picture-book that can bring home to the hearer and the spectator, with a force nothing else can equal, truths which can be impressed on them so vividly in no other way. To hear that view put forth roused Coquelin to the very keenest opposition. " No, no," he would cry, " let us have poetry on the stage, let us have illusion, above all let us have beauty ; let the charm of the theatre lift us into another world." This does not mean that he was not ready to play dramas of modern life, but that they must have some romantic or sentimental pivot, some possible nobility of interpretation. The last play that most of us in England saw him in was the very last word of the conventional drama of the past, Sardou's *L'Affaire des Poisons*. It was a positive relief to the spectator, after seeing so many plays about slums and strikes, to enter into the gorgeous society assembled round Louis of France, to see him surrounded by resplendent nobles, by fine ladies sitting on *tabourets*, by obsequious courtiers ; to see walking about in his palace people bearing the great familiar names of the seventeenth century, to see high-born conspirators lurking behind marble pillars, and wicked duchesses trying

to poison royal personages—and through it all Coquelin, the virtuous abbé, discovering everything, daring everything, threatened, captured, but always coming up smiling, and finally by sheer force of virtue discomfiting all his adversaries. What a strange, gallant world was this which he showed us for the last time, and how bravely he bore himself in it! With that memory we may well be content.

We shall never know what his interpretation would have been of the extraordinary character part he was going to try next, Chantecler, the Gallic Cock. He was delighted, it seems, with the old French word *coqueliner*, meaning the crowing of the cock. The rehearsals of Chantecler, of the rest of the company, that is to say, studying their parts without him, had already begun. As Rostand described it, in a fine and moving image, as he stood by Coquelin's grave, the rehearsals begun had been conducted " toujours autour d'une place vide," the empty space in which the chief actor would shortly stand—" and now," he went on, " that place will be empty for ever—our rehearsals, our performances must always go on with that void in our midst."

Yes, there is no doubt of it, Coquelin's place will always remain empty—the place held by the last of the classics, by the man who joined the great art of the past to the great art of the present. It will never be filled again.

Mrs. Humphry Ward

Written in 1921

The fact that Mrs. Humphry Ward was a thinker and a spiritually-minded philosopher, as well as a writer of stories, imparted a quality to the tales she told which gave her readers something more than a mere interest in the narrative, although that pleasure was theirs as well.

Before the time when by dint of her capacity and enthusiasm, she had succeeded in starting the settlement and play centres with which her name will always be connected, she was already known far and wide as a novelist, as a writer of books which were read and discussed not only wherever English is spoken but also in the many foreign countries into the language of which the books had been translated.

The bent of what Mr. Gladstone called " her brilliant and subtle understanding " was essentially towards literature. She came, as she tells us in her *Recollections*, of a literary stock, and had literary ambitions from her youth upwards. That is the thing to remember and wonder at, in the light of her later social labours, in which so much business capacity was displayed. Many people have worked hard and successfully for the community, and many others have written admirable books ; but when we think of Mrs. Ward, we realise what a rare combination it was that one with her intellectual

gifts and equipment should also be so practical, so efficient and so good.

There was nothing small or mean in her character, nothing unworthy. All those who knew her will bear witness to that. I must instance one among many evidences of her nobility of character : her attitude when the suffrage was granted to women. She had been an ardent opponent of that measure, she had fought it up to the end of the struggle. But when once it was passed, she accepted the situation with frankness and goodwill, and did all that she could to ensure that the vote should be rightly used. And that meant a big and generous nature. We all felt in intercourse with her what that nature was : we felt it in reading her books. A book written with power and sincerity is bound to reveal, whether the writer intends it or not, the quality of the heart as well as of the mind of that writer. It was well for the reading public that Mrs. Ward, in addition to the qualities of her heart and her mind, had indeed the gift of expression which could reveal them to others, the completing art of choosing and using words which uplifted her readers into the region where she thought and felt, and made them think and feel as she did. There are certain qualities common to all Mrs. Ward's writings : distinction of style, felicity of language, a wealth of quotations and allusion, opening to the reader ever wider horizons of thought and suggestion : charm in presentment of scenery, inspired by her love of nature, her knowledge of flowers, trees, birds. When we lift our eyes from her pages we have learned to see further than we did before.

In the stimulating and beautiful book which she called the *Recollections of a Writer*, we learn how all her literary tendencies were fostered by the surroundings of her girlhood and early womanhood. She came to Oxford with her parents at the age of sixteen. She married at the age of twenty-one, and lived at Oxford for nine years longer, before going to London, where she was to take so prominent a place. When she was still a girl, the head of one of the colleges, a man of profound learning, struck by her unusual ability, said to her, "Get to the bottom of something: choose a subject and know everything about it." She eagerly followed his advice, choosing a subject far from commonplace, early Spanish, and went to work in the Bodleian Library at the language and Chronicles of early Spain. Her mind, passionately interested in faith and creed, and now leavened with the learning of the past, became stirred to the depths by the discussion on religious thought then agitating Oxford. She says herself of that time, "The heat of an ever strengthening controversy was in the Oxford air."

She tells how finally in the height of that controversy a sermon delivered by the Bampton lecturer on "the present unsettlement in religion" aroused in her such a shock of indignation that she instantly replied to it by writing a pamphlet called *Unbelief and Sin*, which all Oxford eagerly read. That pamphlet contained the germ of *Robert Elsmere*, which however was not written till seven years later.

Robert Elsmere is not only a deeply interesting love-story; it is the history, told with force and

sincerity, of a human soul struggling in the agony of religious uncertainty. At the time when Mrs. Ward was embarking on that book, she was staying with us in the remote north of Yorkshire : it must have been 1885. We were driving up to some lonely moors. We got out and walked to ease the horses—there were no motors in those days—and as we went she told me the story and plan of the book she meant to write. At the end she asked me what I thought. I said I thought the story most interesting. But I was foolish enough and ignorant enough to add that I was not sure that the main issue of the book, the question of believing and doubting, would interest the general public. She stood still in the moorland road and looked at me with astonishment—and said with a fervour and conviction that I have remembered so often since, " But surely there is nothing else so interesting in this world ! "

Three years later *Robert Elsmere* came out—and I was wrong, and she was most abundantly right. That book reverberated through the world. Thousands and thousands of copies were published, sold, and eagerly read, here and in America ; it was translated into German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Spanish, Portuguese—and probably other tongues, as I believe my list is not quite complete—and brought to Mrs. Ward that amazing success that seemed to come in a day and to lift her on to the very crest of fame. She says in her *Recollections*, " I was naturally carried away by the excitement and astonishment of it." But she never for one instant had her head

turned. She was frankly and simply delighted that the world was willing to listen to what she had so much at heart to say. And her friends, delighted too, rejoiced not only in her success but at the dignity and grace with which she accepted that success and the many others that followed it.

David Grieve, the next novel she wrote, an arresting story with some remarkable character drawing, also was deeply concerned with the problems of spiritual conflict.

David Grieve was followed by *Marcella*, in which entirely new ground was broken. The religious element was not so prominent in it. The canvas is fuller and more coloured. A review in *The Times* of the day said: " Mrs. Humphry Ward again thrusts her hands into the hot fire of living interest. Everywhere is fresh, bright actuality, everywhere are touches of intimacy with the world which she describes." And I may add every page in *Marcella* and in the book which forms the sequel to it, *Sir George Tressady*, carries the reader along with unceasing interest.

Sir George Tressady forms the sequel to *Marcella*, and is no less exciting.

After these early novels Mrs. Ward wrote many others, all bearing the impress of her distinguished talent. *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, *Eleanor*, *Lady Rose's Daughter*, *The Marriage of William Ashe*, *Fenwick's Career*, *The Story of Bessie Costrell*, *Diana Mallory*, *Daphne*, *The Case of Richard Meynell*, *Eltham House*, *The Coryston Family*, *The Mating of Lydia*, *Canadian Born*, *Lady Connie*, and three novels directly bearing on the war—*Missing*, *The War*

and Elizabeth, and *Harvest*. It will be seen what a mass of work this represents.

Helbeck of Bannisdale, written next after *Marcella*, again presented a powerful situation of religious conflict. "It evoked," Mrs. Ward tells us, "in those to whom it appealed a deep and passionate response."

In *Eleanor* the richly coloured scene is laid in Rome and its surroundings. A great American critic said of *Eleanor*, "A thing of rare beauty, a large and noble performance."

In some of the other books, such as *Lady Rose's Daughter*, *William Ashe*, *Fenwick's Career*, old historical situations are cleverly modernised.

Mrs. Ward's power of continued literary work and production never slackened with the years. It went on to the very end. The last book she wrote, an effective story called *Harvest*, appeared after her death. The scene is laid in a woman landworker's camp in England during the war, in the neighbourhood of a forestry camp—also partly run, as many of those camps were, by women. And in the description of that picturesque setting, one again feels Mrs. Ward's rare capacity of receiving, retaining, reproducing the impressions of the moment. One feels it also in *The War and Elizabeth*, written in 1916, perhaps the most striking of the war novels. No better description of this book can be given than the few simple words prefixed to the book by the writer. We read on the fly-leaf:

"This book was finished in April 1918, and represents the mood of a supremely critical moment during the war."

And besides these successful novels inspired directly by the war, she also wrote during those years—in 1916, 1917, and 1919—three books about the war not in the form of fiction. That was certainly a noteworthy output. The first of these, *England's Effort*, was published in 1916. It was written at the request of Mr. Roosevelt and with the strong approval and encouragement of the Government of this country, in order that the American public might realise the effort and sacrifices of Great Britain in the war. The book was written in the form of letters to Mr. Roosevelt. In the preface she says: "These letters are the fruit first of all of an urgent call from America, and then of three months' travelling, thinking, and writing. They have had necessarily to be written in haste." But the things that Mrs. Ward wrote in haste were turned out with as much literary effect, as much skill, as if she had had unlimited time to spend upon them. And the very fact of the fiery rapidity with which they were done carried her message more surely to the goal.

This is what she wrote to Mr. Roosevelt about the genesis of the book:

"It was you who gave the impulse last year which led to the writing of letters on *England's Effort* in the war, published in book form in June 1918. Your appeal that I should write a general account for America of the part played by England in the vast struggle, found me in our quiet country house busy with quite other work, and at first I thought it impossible that I could attempt so new

a task as you proposed to me. But support and encouragement came from our own authorities, and, like many other thousands of English women under orders, I could only go and do my best. I spent some time in the Munition areas, watching the enormous and rapid development of our war industries, and of the astonishing part played in it by women ; I was allowed to visit a portion of the Fleet, and finally to spend twelve days in France, ten of them among the great supply bases, and hospital camps, with two days at the British Headquarters and on the front.

" The result was a short book which has been translated into many tongues : French, Italian, Dutch, German, Russian, Portuguese, and Japanese—which has brought me many American letters from many different States, and has been perhaps most widely read of all among our own people."

Those simple words " I spent some time in the Munition areas " dismiss in a sentence a series of activities that one would have thought would have been barely possible even for the young and vigorous. But Mrs. Ward took these activities in her stride, with a mental and physical energy which made those wonder who were looking on.

This is a typical day which she describes as if the power to do it were a matter of course. I abridge the beginning from her own vivid description. She left early in the morning a country house in the North where she had been staying, that was being used as a hospital ; she goes to an industrial town ; she visits the new workshops staffed by girls.

Another visit the same day to a small-arms factory of importance. An afternoon train takes her on to another town, and then she adds :

" I spent my evening talking to my host of labour and politics, the chance of the war, American feeling towards us, the task of the Minister of Munitions, the temper of the Scotch and English workmen, the flux into which manufacturing conditions have been thrown during the war, and how far old landmarks can be restored after it. We talked hard on these and other topics till I must needs break it off unwillingly to get some sleep and write some notes."

And the next day and the next it was done all over again, the notes immediately written up and at night, as before.

Small wonder that the book which resulted brought home to the Americans the magnitude of England's effort before they came to our help. The deep impression produced by *England's Effort*, widely read and translated, led to the writing of another book *Towards the Goal*, again addressed to Mr. Roosevelt. It was published in 1917, when there was still a long way between ourselves and victory.

She went abroad again and was received at G.H.Q., France, a special privilege of which she writes in these terms :

" For a woman to be received here is an exception—perhaps I may say an honour—of which I

am rather tremulously aware. But a little conversation with those able and earnest men shows plainly that they have considered the matter like any other incident in the day's work. The other book *England's Effort* has been useful, so I am to be allowed to see and write for myself ; and, therefore, what information can be given to me as to the growth of our military power in France since last year will be given."

That information was given to her—instantly assimilated—again recorded, and the result was a second book as fine and effective as the first, ending with this solemn and moving appeal to America :

" So now the call of those hundreds and thousands who have given their young lives so beloved, so rich in promise, for their country and the freedom of men, is in your ears and ours ; the dead are witnesses to the compact between you and us."

In the book that followed, *Fields of Victory*, published in 1919, we have the account in detail of many of the battles of the last year of the war, told with an accuracy, a spirit and technical understanding which won Mrs. Ward high praise from many distinguished soldiers. Before writing it she went abroad for the third time, just two months after the armistice, in the very depth of winter. She says in the first chapter :

" We motored during January some nine hundred miles through the length and breadth of France,

some of it in severe weather. We have spent some seven days on the French front, with a couple of nights at Metz, and a similar time at Strasbourg, and rather more than a week in Paris. Now, sitting in this quiet London house, I seem to be still bending forward in the motor-car looking out so intently that one's eyes suffered at the unrolling scene."

And those eyes knew how to see. Mrs. Ward's writings and doings during the war mattered incalculably. As I look back they seem to me her finest achievement of all. Her absolute mastery of her craft as a writer stood her in good stead then—the pen in her hand became an uplifted sword rallying the waverers.

The Spirit of Wartime, that inexorable search-light which penetrated into the hearts of men and women on every side and revealed so much that was great and noble, never, I verily believe, revealed a nobler spirit than that of Mary Ward, when, ageing and frail, but with unflagging purpose and brilliance undimmed, she obeyed the call of her country and went forth in its service.

Elizabeth Robins

The passage of Elizabeth Robins through the world, a flaming torch in her hand, may well bewilder those whose prudent path in life is the beaten track. She has from the beginning confronted each successive phase of experience with the same indomitable and upright independence. Circumstance has never mastered her. The rich variety of her existence has developed a personality which has stood forth as a beacon to many of the women of her time.

She was born in one of the Southern States of North America, at a time when storm-tossed memories of the Civil War were still vividly present to those around her. The early chapters of her book, *The Open Question*, record the indelible imprint made on a rare and sensitive nature by the tales and traditions of the Civil War and of the liberation of the slaves. That process which to all of us is familiar, of harbouring uncomprehended in our memory incidents of childhood of which we suddenly realise and interpret the meaning in later years, became to Elizabeth Robins, with her deep insight and quickness of impression, a store-house of treasure. In *The Open Question*, part of which may no doubt be looked upon as autobiographical, it is evident that every detail of those by-gone days stands out in the writer's memory, and regarded in the light of the later interpretation it constitutes one of the most striking records of that momentous

time. It is of keen interest in the light of the subsequent career of the writer to see how the child described in those first chapters is the Elizabeth Robins of to-day, with her unswerving truthfulness, her passionate intolerance of authority, and her irrepressible dramatic gifts—and yet, coupled with these, is the beautiful picture of her absolute and voluntary surrender to the influence of the older kinswoman, type of a past age, whom she venerated and loved. That power of whole-hearted reverence is an apanage of the finer minds. The mind of the younger woman in the book could never have harboured a small or a mean thought—nor can the mind of her delineator. But in spite of this willing submission, the child's soul burnt with desire to interpret life for herself, to achieve her own destiny in the way she longed for. Her thoughts, her hopes, were increasingly centred on the stage, so utterly and wildly aloof from her surroundings.

Her vocation finally burst its bonds, and she left sheltered home and dignified guardianship to embark on the perilous adventure of the stage, on which she was so gloriously to succeed. In so doing, she broke away once and for all from the life of her inheritance, from the tradition of those to whom publicity, especially for women, was the Thing abhorred. And when after her modest beginnings she returned like a heroine of fiction to her native State as the successful Jeune Première, playing leading parts with shining success, the family she was rejoining were hardly conscious of the occasion. She persuaded one of them to witness the performance. Wounded to the quick by what he

considered an unbecoming revelation of emotion in public, he got up and left the theatre in the middle of her great scene. When she proudly wrote to her splendid old kinswoman of the first salary she had received, the reply came in words of icy condemnation : " You are the first woman of your race who has earned money." But it was of no use. No other claims counted but those of her art.

During the two years that she was a member of the famous Stock Theatre Company in Boston she played 380 parts, a training seldom vouchsafed to the actress of to-day.

A series of hazards led her to come to Europe, with the widow of the famous Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull. The first European country with which Elizabeth Robins made intimate acquaintance was the country of Ibsen. She intended to return to America with her companions, who tarried in London for four days on their way to Liverpool. During these four days an opportunity was offered her on the English stage. She had to decide at once ; she was sailing next day. She decided to remain, and that evening determined her destiny. She has found a permanent abiding-place in England. She shares her allegiance to the land of her adoption with her unceasing allegiance to the land of her birth.

After some short years in London, we find her, in conjunction with another young American actress, flinging down the gauntlet of defiance to the conventional playgoer, and running a series of Ibsen's plays at a time when he was derided by the general public, and when, according to the most obvious

test of success, it was supposed that such an enterprise had " no money in it." But the two young enthusiasts who believed in him produced his plays, and played them in a way which took London by storm. The fact that they had to overcome hostility and opposition, let alone indifference, gave their work a fire and an impetus that carried it through to triumph. The general public of to-day have by this time learned what they must think about Ibsen, and that he is among the great. But to those who saw Elizabeth Robins in that first crossing of swords with convention, the enterprise will stand out as the highest inspiration of her genius. Great acting can live only in the memories of those who record it. It can put on immortality only in the terms of their testimony. It behoves, therefore, those who saw the plays of Ibsen acted by Elizabeth Robins to place on record some of their ineffaceable memories. Hedda Gabler is probably the part in which most people will remember her—Hedda, the cruel, the baleful seeker after thrills. Who that saw it will ever forget what Elizabeth Robins did with the end of the second act ? The crouching figure by the fire, Lövborg's book in her terrible maleficent grasp, the firelight flickering on the sinister triumph of hatred in her eyes, as handful by handful she cast the manuscript into the flames, the intensity of her sibilant whisper shuddering through the air—" Your child, Thea ! your child and Eilert Lövborg's . . . now, I am burning the child ! "

That picture, and many others—would it were possible to describe them here—cannot be thought

of even to-day by those who saw them without a share of the wild excitement in the midst of which Hedda whirled through space.

And who will ever forget that moment in the first act of *The Master Builder*, when Elizabeth Robins knocked at the door and then strode in from the mountains, her tall staff in her hand, panoplied in her youthful strength and unquenchable resolve, herself the embodiment of the younger generation that was entering in? She has knocked at many another door since, and entered with the same glorious confidence.

It was the inevitable complement of her temperament, of her revolt from the accepted, her eager search for the new, that when later she tried the ordinary stage on conventional lines it lost interest for her. But she had another form of art under her hand, the art of the pen. Her first attempt was a short story called *The Lucky Sixpence*. Published in the *Albany Review* under a pseudonym, it attracted immediate attention. It was followed by many others, at first still under a pseudonym, than under her own name, including *The Open Question*, to which reference has been made. There is no space in this article to discuss her writings; they are still available for the whole world to see. But the impression made by her great book *The Magnetic North*, founded on her amazing expedition into the heart of the Klondyke, must be recalled.

She excursed into play-writing with signal success, in a play entitled *Votes for Women* produced by Granville Barker, in support of a cause which she looked upon as sacred. That cause she cham-

pioned with written and spoken eloquence until the need for championship was over. Still an ardent believer in the claims of women, she is ever ready to enter the lists on their behalf ; the power of her pen, and her gift of enmeshing others into her impassioned enterprises, making her in every encounter a redoubtable adversary and an invaluable helper.

During the war-years of storm and stress she gave herself unsparingly to the public service of the country she had adopted. Many have been her fields of activity. She became, in conjunction with another successful writer, librarian to a London War Hospital run by women. She was later persuaded to take service under the Food Ministry, and delivered a series of addresses in England and in Ireland. She threw herself heart and soul into the starting in the village where she lives of a Women's Institute, which became during the war a real economic factor in the life of the community. In the great social readjustments of our time she is frankly on the side of the working classes. Her help is invoked in every direction by those who are trying to answer some of the pressing calls for reform that ring in our ears to-day. And everywhere she gives her best ; she brings the same potent equipment of her glowing purpose and her eloquence, enhanced by her great personal charm.

There is a far-away north country village where she is wont to delight the women by tales of her experiences in the Klondyke and elsewhere. By those villagers she is adored. So is she, the child lover, adored also by a certain group of children in a remote country house who have listened

enthralled day by day to tales from *Uncle Remus*, delivered with the unrivalled diction of one who can reproduce the old-time negro talk.

And readings and recitals alike are the performance of a great artist, wielding over young and old, unsophisticated and critical, the same spell.

She has made a very large number of friends in this country, and has had, in addition to her renown, a full measure of what is called social success. There never was anyone who had her head less turned by it. The chief pleasure she seems to take in her achievements, and what they have brought her, has been the establishing of her country home in Sussex, where she inhabits what was a charming old farmhouse, and where, with her joy in gardening, her love of nature—interpreted and enhanced by her love of poetry and of letters—she passes delightful days. Athwart them perhaps sweep memories of another beloved abode—before the war, each winter saw her crossing the Atlantic to a country home in Florida, the home of the great ilexes and the orange groves, that " wind-swept, sun-steeped place, uplifted like an island above encompassing seas of green," where the kind dark faces were still about her, and the voices of her youth sounded in her ears.

The greatest of her possessions is her art of human intercourse, of companionship with the congenial of every kind. To those who meet her in society, life seems to be quickened and uplifted as she passes by. To those who can call themselves her friends, that friendship is a privilege, an incentive, and a standard.

PART III

ARTICLES IN "LA SCIENCE SOCIALE"

I. ETON ET LE TYPE DES "PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

II. UN RÉFORMATEUR DE L'ÉCOLE EN ANGLETERRE: THOMAS ARNOLD ET SON ŒUVRE.

Introductory

I preface these two articles,—written for French readers—on English schools, by stating briefly what gave rise to their first publication thirty years ago. In M. Demolins' brilliant book *A quoi tient la Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons*, published in 1897, he gave as a type of the English Public Schools two which, although undoubtedly interesting of their kind, could certainly not be considered typical of our system. These were Abbotsholme in Derbyshire and Bedales in Hants. I have no space here to deal with the organisation of these two schools, which had about fifty boys each at that time, and which comprehended, we are told, life in the open air, gardening, handicrafts, outdoor sports and games, and also an indoor life of which the pursuits and recreations aimed at giving an atmosphere of home life and training. The school at Bedales I believe took girls as well as boys. There are now co-education schools in various parts of England, but even to-day they certainly cannot be taken as a type of our system, although I understand they produce successful results.

There was a passage in M. Demolins' book to the effect that there was nothing resembling military training and discipline for our youths unless they went into the army.

I ventured to write to him with reference to both these points : I told him briefly something about our big public schools, and mentioned the Eton

Volunteers, as they were then called corresponding to the present O.T.C. (Officers' Training Corps) as well as others, to show that at our public schools there was a beginning of discipline and drill.

He replied to my letter with the most tolerant kindness, saying that he was much interested in what I had written to him and asking me to write in his review, *La Science Sociale*, an article describing a typical English Public School.

In response to this I wrote the article here reprinted on Eton, which appeared in *La Science Sociale* for April 1899. I saw M. Demolins later in Paris and we discussed the question of French and English education, after which, again at his request, I wrote an article in the *Science Sociale* about Rugby and Dr. Arnold.

I now reprint these two articles. Of Rugby I have no firsthand knowledge, although the story of Dr. Arnold and his achievement is familiar to all who care about the annals of education. Of Eton I had at the time the French article was written a more or less intimate knowledge.

The article is, I believe, tolerably accurate as a description of the Eton of the time. It was looked through and endorsed by a very enthusiastic and popular master, the late Charles Lowry.

And now, thirty years after, I have submitted this same article to another competent authority on Eton, a housemaster who was himself an Etonian—a colleger—and who has returned to Eton to spend the rest of his life. He has noted the differences now obtaining in the school organisation on various points that I have mentioned.

I have briefly tabulated these and printed them opposite the first page of the French article.

As will be seen, the organisation of the school as a whole is much the same. There are certain differences of curriculum and administration, and differences of details as to hours, etc. But it is not so much my present purpose to establish the differences between the former Eton and the Eton of to-day as to consider the differences between French and English education, which were the cause of the article in the *Science Sociale* being written. The divergence between these two systems of education, still very wide at the time that article was written, has been gradually lessened in recent years, owing especially to a well-marked movement in France towards developing school athletics and sports. It must be added that what later in these pages I have said about the French Lycées is knowledge at secondhand only, although acquired from some very admirable sources. The many inferences and surmises—I do not pretend they were more—deduced by me from the inquiries I have made about French schools may very often be mistaken.

An English public school-boy, with very few exceptions, will speak of his school with a rapture of retrospect and defiant partisanship. I think I am right in saying that thirty years ago, at the time I am writing of, not many French boys would have spoken of their schools in the same spirit. I occasionally asked Frenchmen whom I met at that time and before it whether they looked back to their school days with pleasure or the reverse.

The answers generally showed that they had no ardent feeling for the school itself. They were more likely to have it for individual masters.

There is also another possible explanation of the different points of view of the schoolboys of the two countries : it is that the school life of the English boy from early childhood, say from the age of nine years to nineteen, is marked by far more variety, and therefore presumably of interest, than the life of the French boy.

The school days of the English boy present successive phases of alternating inferiority and power. He goes to a preparatory school at the age of about nine. Before he leaves it at the age of twelve or thirteen he has become one of the head boys of the preparatory school, he has learned to govern and he has learned the meaning of responsibility. On entering the public school, where he has become a lower boy again, he is looked down upon as an entirely inferior being. He then goes up gradually through the school, and eventually, if he arrives at the sixth form, again becomes a responsible ruler and a power in the community. Then he leaves the school and goes to the university. For the third time he sheds his greatness : he is now a " freshman," appraised critically and perhaps rather contemptuously by men who have been at the university a year or more. He again goes through the phases of mounting the ladder and may, if he succeeds in achievement, find himself before he leaves the university again a personage, and at the top. Fortunate those who on leaving the university are not called upon again

to descend to the depths, without the subsequent glories of the re-ascent!

During these years, therefore, the English boy has looked at experience from many sides. He has learned to obey authority, to accept responsibility, to adapt himself to sudden changes in his relation to the world around him: and this on the whole may have fashioned him into something which when he has left Oxford or Cambridge has qualified him to encounter life.

The French boy has not, I understand, during these all-important years of schooling and development, between the ages of nine years and nineteen, had the violent and exciting readjustments of experience that has come to his English contemporaries. He has entered the Lycée as a little boy, and gone up through it from one class to the other until the moment when he leaves. He has no doubt during this time had the keen enjoyment of boy friendships, of competition, of companionship in study and recreation; but I doubt whether he has known the exultant happiness of an English boy who, at that stage of his life, is pre-eminent among his fellows at a big school. I will quote as a very distinguished example of such a schoolboy, Alfred Lyttelton, who was at Eton from 1868 to 1875, accepted by his own generation and those who followed him as the most successful type of Etonian. He is reported to have said, "No position in after life, however great, can be as complete as that of a swell at Eton." He himself, we are told, in the admirable biography written by his wife, was "practically king of the school" when he was

at Eton, owing to his personality and charm as well as of his prowess at cricket, the apanage of the Lyttelton family.

I do not know if the position of a " swell " has any counterpart in the Lycée system. I should hardly imagine that the latter was elastic enough, or gave individual freedom enough, to admit it.

I understand, by the way, that the privileged at Eton are no longer called swells. I do not know what they are now called ; but at any rate, whatever their appellation, their privileges and their unassailable status still remain. I continue, therefore, to use the word in speaking of Eton, as it is a convenient label.

There are various obvious qualifications which entitle a boy at Eton to this eminence. He may excel in games, if he is a Dry Bob distinguished on land ; he may excel at rowing, if he is a Wet Bob and has chosen the river. If he is in the Eton Eight (boats) or the Eton Eleven (cricket) he is of course a swell, one of the kings of the realm. But the most secure, unassailable position of all is that of being a member of " Pop." The Eton debating society, now known officially as the Eton Society, derives its familiar name of Pop, we are told, from *popina*, an eating-shop where the original meetings of the Society were first held. Pop is not so much a debating society to-day as it was thirty years ago, but it is still the stronghold of the most distinguished. Members of Pop may walk arm-in-arm, they may roll up their umbrellas, they may wear coloured waistcoats. No one else may do these things, though the rest of the school share with them the

unalterable custom of always turning up their trousers and never buttoning the bottom button of their waistcoats.

At the same period that Alfred Lyttelton was at Eton, when he and his contemporaries during their hours out of school were either playing games vigorously, or walking about within the tolerably wide bounds allowed to them in twos and threes or alone, the schoolboys on the other side of the Channel had not so much licence. It was still at that time the custom of the boys of a French Lycée within the walls of a town to take their exercise on the half-holidays by walking in the streets two and two in charge of their masters. One of the indelible impressions of my childhood passed in Paris in the sixties was seeing in the streets *collégiens* from the French Lycées walking gravely along—a long line of boys in couples, clothed in their tight-fitting jackets with shining buttons, and peaked caps, giving something of the aspect of a uniform.

To our thinking in England the semi-military and official organisation of the French schools, and the fact, proudly quoted, that every French schoolboy all over France was doing the same lesson at the same moment, may be a reason why there is not as much movement and independence in the life of the French schools as in our own. In England each head master is free to impress his own personality on the school he is directing, and a friendly and stimulating rivalry may rise up between his and other schools. I understand that in spite of the great and growing change that has come into the spirit of the school life in France, the military organisation

survives in many details of its administration, one being the fact that the signal for going in and out of school is still given by a drum being beaten, the beater of the drum being called Le Tapin. M. Bourget, in his short story of that name which gives its title to a volume lately published, relates an incident where a schoolboy out for a walk in the environs of Paris breaks the ranks and runs away across country. He is pursued and brought back, placed in solitary confinement, and finally expelled.

One may take this account presumably as a reliable account of a likely incident of that time. I do not know whether it would happen now; I imagine not. I do not think it could have happened in England at any time.

Still, it is quite possible, after all, that the French boys I saw walking past forbidden to break their ranks were as happy as the boys at Eton. I have no means of judging. Happiness and good spirits are, fortunately, in most countries the enviable attributes of healthy youth.

It was some twenty years after the time when I used to watch the *collégiens* walking through the streets of Paris that there was a movement started in France in favour of reviving the open air sports and competitions, which, as shown in M. Jusserand's brilliant book on the subject, were so popular in ancient France. This movement brought a radical change over the youthful spirit of the Lycées. It was in 1888 that the Lycée Lakanal, installed on a beautiful country site outside Paris, gave the first great impulse towards physical exercises for the young by the organisation of games in the open air.

Lakanal was the first state Lycée to advocate these games and sports. The example was followed by others of the Lycées and gradually the spirit of competition in athletics took possession of French youth, encouraged from the outset by the wise administrator at the head of Lakanal, M. Frinquet, of whom one of his pupils said " he has grasped the virtue of sports and the influence they may have in the renovation of French youth." There was a recent account in a French newspaper of a great gathering held lately at Lakanal of present and former pupils, who all seemed to feel the ardent devotion towards their school formerly only found in the English boy. The writer of this account, M. Frantz Reichel, who with generous enthusiasm has himself contributed a great deal to the revival and spread of the athletic spirit among French youth, recalls the joys and excitements of matches played against comrades in other Lycées who had joined in this movement. The Lycéen of to-day can look forward to continuing these athletic competitions after his school-days are over.

It is with some surprise that I find in the article I wrote on Eton in the *Science Sociale* in 1899 that I had imagined it was necessary for the information of French readers to give a brief description of the game of football. A French reader of to-day would certainly be as well acquainted with the game as an English one, for football, as well as other athletic sports, appears to have been taken up with enthusiasm in France.

I have under my hand various recent issues of a French newspaper, from which I transcribe from the

page headed La Vie Sportive the announcements of various games which still retain their English names. The headings given below are each followed in the columns of the newspaper by an animated description of the different events.

Football.
Cross-country.
Tennis.
Rugby.
Base-ball.
Hockey.
Golf.

It is difficult to estimate the influence on the young Frenchman of this liberation of physical energy. We have now gone a long way from the solemn walks taken in couples in the streets. I believe, however, that there still is a considerable and perhaps desirable distance from this revival of interest in athletics to the absorption in them seen in English schools, presumably to the prejudice of book-learning.

I should add that all the testimony I have been able to collect referring to educational results of to-day in both countries points to the fact that at any moment of his scholastic career the French boy has acquired a great deal more knowledge from books than his English contemporary. In that respect, at any rate, he is better equipped. I am not prepared to say which of the two systems should be preferred.

Certain of the statements made in this article are now inaccurate ; they should be as follows :

P. 142, *line* 10.—Learning Greek at a private school, I am told, is now the exception rather than the rule.

P. 142, *lines* 9 *and* 10 *from bottom.*—Fourth Form and Remove have three divisions, lower, middle, and upper.

P. 147, *line* 5.—The custom of having two fags at each flogging has now been abolished.

P. 148, *lines* 18.—Overcoats may now be worn before St. Andrew's Day.

P. 151, *lines* 15 *and* 16.—The positions of Captain of the School and of the Oppidans come entirely by seniority.

P. 154, *line* 9.—" Pop," the Eton Society, has almost entirely ceased to be a debating society.

P. 157, *line* 9.—Short leave has now been abolished.

Eton et le Type des "Public Schools" en Angleterre

Written in 1899

Impressions d'une Anglaise

C'est avec une grande hésitation que j'ose offrir à des lecteurs français quelques considérations sur le système scolaire de l'Angleterre. Il est bien loin de ma pensée de vouloir revendiquer, dans les pages de *La Science Sociale*, nos titres à ce brevet de supériorité que la générosité de M. Demolins a bien voulu nous décerner. Je chercherai seulement à donner un aperçu, bien superficiel sans doute, de l'esprit, du but général de l'éducation en Angleterre, telle qu'elle apparaît aux Anglais. Il est possible que, pour nous aussi, cet aperçu ne soit pas entièrement exact ; car l'habitude, qui finit par confondre l'utile et le nuisible, nous empêche parfois de les démêler, à moins qu'un étranger bienveillant ne vienne nous faire la leçon. Il n'y a rien de plus instructif que ces points de vue comparés. La différence de ce qu'on voit de l'intérieur ou de l'extérieur est si grande, qu'on a parfois de la peine à se convaincre qu'il s'agit du même objet. Ce qui est concave au dedans est nécessairement convexe au dehors : ce qui à l'intérieur est dans l'ombre, ce qui appelle à peine l'attention, paraît, vu de dehors, un point proéminent qui attire la lumière. Je doute

pour cette raison qu'il soit jamais possible pour un étranger, même le mieux renseigné, le plus fin observateur, de pouvoir se rendre compte du fonctionnement d'un système quelconque, du même point de vue que ceux qui y ont toujours été soumis. Il est évident que, pour lui, les traits qui feront tout d'abord saillie ne seront pas nécessairement les plus importants, mais bien ceux qui divergent le plus de ce qui se passe chez lui : et que, voulant faire une étude des traits caractéristiques de tel système, il fera plutôt une étude des différences qui existent entre celui-ci et ceux de son propre pays.

Les Anglais suivront avec un sympathique intérêt la tentative courageuse et énergique de réforme entreprise par M. Demolins à l'*École des Roches*, ainsi que le cadre très pratique des études qu'on y doit suivre. Qu'il soit possible ou non d'acclimater en son entier la méthode d'un autre pays, d'une autre race, deux des conditions au moins, l'une morale, l'autre physique, qui nous paraissent indispensables au succès, y seront remplies. La première, la condition morale, c'est que les rapports entre les professeurs et les élèves seront basés sur la confiance et la coopération ; la seconde, la condition matérielle, c'est une installation à la campagne, ce qui nous paraît, à nous autres Anglais, d'une suprême importance. La possibilité de dépenser le superflu de l'énergie par de nombreux exercices au grand air, la différence entre l'influence morale de ce que l'élève voit et entend à la campagne d'avec ce qui l'entoure à la ville, tout cela nous paraît si important que nous avons peu à peu transporté presque tous

nos grands établissements d'éducation à la campagne. Westminster, qui est encore au cœur de Londres près de l'Abbaye et des Maisons du Parlement, était, lors de sa fondation, située en pleine campagne.

Je prendrai, pour le moment, comme type de notre système scolaire nos *public schools*, correspondant plus ou moins aux lycées, notamment Eton, qui a le plus grand nombre d'élèves.

I

Sous certains aspects généraux, on peut considérer une *public school* comme le type de toutes les autres, quoique, par le détail, ces divers collèges diffèrent entre eux, la centralisation et l'uniformité qui régissent les grandes maisons d'éducation en France et en Allemagne n'existant pas chez nous. Nous trouvons même un avantage à ce qu'il en soit ainsi. " Chaque école," a écrit un professeur à Oxford, auparavant professeur à Saint-Paul, " se pique de produire des élèves d'un type particulier." Ces différences, selon nous, tendent à stimuler entre les différents collèges une rivalité virile et salutaire, qui trouve une issue dans leurs luttes au *football*, au *cricket*, au jeu de racquet, au canotage.

On peut dire, en thèse générale, que le système d'éducation dans nos *public schools* a pour base la confiance, la loyauté, la liberté. Voilà la condition essentielle, voilà la tradition de la vie de nos écoles. Il est évident que l'esprit dominant de chacune d'entre elles doit varier d'une génération à une autre,

selon les différentes influences de l'époque, les idées particulières de chaque directeur, etc. L'Eton d'aujourd'hui n'est pas l'Eton du siècle ni même du demi-siècle dernier. L'important pour nous c'est l'Eton d'aujourd'hui, et les citoyens qu'elle va nous donner. *As the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined*, dit le proverbe anglais. C'est durant les années où le jeune garçon passe de l'enfance à l'adolescence, ces précieuses années entre les âges de treize et de vingt ans, où le caractère prend son pli définitif, où il reçoit l'empreinte qu'il ne perd jamais entièrement, que nos enfants font l'apprentissage de la vie. C'est donc alors, ou jamais, qu'il importe de la leur faire voir sous l'aspect que nous désirons qu'elle garde plus tard, puisque la vie de l'école, du collège, reflétera insensiblement, inévitablement, la vie nationale. Il serait peut-être plus juste de dire que la vie nationale résulte de celle du collège, puisque c'est là que sont formés les citoyens de l'avenir, qui, devenus hommes faits, tendront insensiblement à suivre le chemin qui leur a été tracé dans la jeunesse. Si pendant cette période critique l'enfant acquiert insensiblement la conviction que la qualité qui prime toutes les autres est la loyauté, qu'il faut sauvegarder l'honneur de l'école en y continuant la tradition de l'esprit de droiture, de liberté, et de virilité, celui-là deviendra plus tard un membre sain et vigoureux d'une société libre, dont son appui a contribué à assurer la solide continuité.

Dès l'instant où le petit Anglais prend sa place dans la *public school*, il en devient le défenseur : le défenseur des droits de son école, le soutien de ses traditions. Voilà la différence énorme, je dirais

presque infranchissable, entre notre système et celui des autres pays ; c'est sur cette tradition séculaire que repose l'organisation des *public schools*. Il est évident que le temps y a apporté bien des modifications ; mais, en somme, l'antiquité d'Eton, de Winchester, de Rugby est, pour les élèves, un titre à leur respect et à leur admiration. Ce culte est partagé par les professeurs. Il n'est plus question ici pour les élèves d'être forcés à contre-cœur de respecter une autorité personnelle qu'un professeur quelconque se sera arrogée, d'accorder de mauvaise volonté à un règlement méticuleux une obéissance que le professeur s'efforcera de maintenir par des punitions. La plupart des professeurs à Eton y ont été eux-mêmes élevés, ils y reviennent souvent après leur stage à l'Université. Il arrive donc que le professeur retrouve dans la *Sixth Form*, la classe la plus élevée, des élèves qui ont été, pour ainsi dire, ses condisciples, puisqu'ils commençaient leurs études dans les classes inférieures au moment où lui, *Sixth Form boy*, les finissait. Ce système n'est peut-être pas idéal ; l'influence de cette existence continue passée par le professeur pendant si longtemps sous la même influence, dans le même entourage, puisqu'il retrouve à l'université ses camarades d'Eton, tend inévitablement à rétrécir son horizon ; son point de vue s'en ressentira. D'un autre côté, cela produit une solidarité, un esprit de corps, une communauté d'intérêts entre les professeurs et élèves dont il serait difficile d'exagérer l'effet. Ici l'esprit de révolte ne pénètre pas : le jeune Anglais n'a que faire de se révolter contre une autorité qu'il partage réellement, puisque l'admini-

stration, le gouvernement du collège, à mesure qu'il s'avance dans les classes, rentrent de plus en plus dans ses propres mains. Pendant ces années, il se familiarise peu à peu avec les devoirs d'un citoyen : il est appelé à prendre une part active dans l'administration de ce qui lui semble l'État le plus important du monde. Je m'étendrai davantage sur ce sujet un peu plus loin, en parlant avec plus de détails de la vie journalière et de l'organisation d'Eton. Je dirai seulement que l'élève qui a été, soit *captain of his house*, c'est-à-dire le plus ancien dans une des maisons parmi lesquelles les élèves sont répartis, soit le chef du canotage, du *cricket* ou du *football*, a été accoutumé à diriger, à se faire obéir, à employer le tact, qui mène à la popularité. C'est-à-dire qu'il a été membre actif et utile d'une société qui reproduit en miniature cette société plus vaste dans laquelle il sera jeté à l'entrée dans la vie, après avoir quitté l'Université : et que, grâce aux devoirs, aux emplois pour ainsi dire publics, qu'il a été appelé à remplir à la *public school* et à l'Université, le jeune Anglais prendra sans difficulté sa place parmi cette masse énorme de ses compatriotes pratiques, prêts à remplir sans rémunération toutes les charges publiques qui se présenteront, si onéreuses qu'elles soient. L'Anglais deviendra magistrat, juge de paix, membre de comités, de corporations, sans hésiter, sans se plaindre, et sans exiger que ses services, qui demandent une dépense assez considérable de temps et d'énergie, reçoivent aucune compensation pécuniaire. C'est cette longue habitude de service vouée à la chose publique, c'est cet esprit véritablement républicain uni à l'esprit conservateur dont nos

public schools sont un foyer, qui font de l'Anglais un être essentiellement *law-abiding*. Le mot est presque aussi intraduisible que la qualité qu'il représente. Il désigne celui non seulement qui observe la loi, mais dont la tendance naturelle est de l'observer. C'est cette tendance de " *law-abidingness* " qui empêchera l'esprit de révolte d'avoir beaucoup de prise sur le jeune Anglais, lorsque, plus tard, à ses débuts à l'Université, il passera par une phase de réaction contre la dignité, la responsabilité, la bonne conduite de ses dernières années à sa *public school.* C'est alors que, paraissant à ses propres yeux un homme fait au lieu d'un écolier, il lui prend des velléités d'insubordination qui le poussent à des manifestations saugrenues tout à fait inconnues jusqu'ici. Mais cette effervescence d'une jeunesse vigoureuse n'est pas dangereuse, et se calmera à mesure que le jeune homme s'avance, qu'il reconquiert la conscience de la dignité, de la responsabilité, dont il s'était senti dépouillé lorsque, après avoir été un des " grands " de son lycée, il était redevenu un des " nouveaux " de son Université. Il faut se rappeler que, si l'écolier, le " *public school boy* " en Angleterre, jouit d'une liberté bien autre que celle du lycéen en France, la vie d'un étudiant aux universités en Angleterre est beaucoup plus surveillée, plus soumise à la discipline que celle des étudiants des universités dans les autres pays. Mais, en somme, l'Anglais s'en accommode assez bien : arrivé à ce point, l'habitude de respecter, d'administrer même les lois, de s'incliner devant la continuité des choses sociales est devenue trop profondément enracinée pour être facilement étranglée.

Il continuera probablement de même jusqu'à sa mort. Si, au contraire, nous supposons un système d'éducation inspiré par des idées tout à fait opposées, d'après lequel, entre les années de treize ans et de vingt ans, le jeune homme a été privé de toute indépendance, de toute liberté, de toute initiative personnelle, il paraît également inévitable que le principal débouché qui s'offrira à son énergie prendra la forme de tentatives continuelles de révolte, le poussant à circonvenir de toutes les façons possibles une autorité qui lui paraît souvent, et avec raison, injuste et tyrannique. Ce sera donc, dans la plupart des cas, avec cette empreinte indélébile de révolte contre l'autorité, d'un sourd ressentiment contre le règlement mesquin et soupçonneux dont il a été harcelé à chaque pas, qu'il entre en possession de la pleine et entière liberté qui accompagne la vie à l'Université, surtout si cette Université est située, non comme chez nous dans une petite ville de province très surveillée, mais dans une capitale. La responsabilité de la vie, le devoir envers la patrie, se présentent à une intelligence qui, si vivace qu'elle soit, est sous ces rapports pleinement inexpérimentée et indisciplinée.

II

Il ne rentre pas dans le cadre de cet article d'aborder la description des diverses institutions scolaires de l'Angleterre. D'abord les écoles élémentaires, *Elementary Schools*, tant *Board Schools* que *Voluntary Schools*, où les enfants des deux sexes

de la classe ouvrière restent jusqu'à l'âge de quatorze ans. Puis les écoles secondaires, les *High Schools* et les *Grammar Schools*, dont les élèves, appartenant pour la plupart à la classe moyenne, reçoivent une éducation solide qui les met en état d'entrer à l'Université, si bon leur semble, à la fin de leur période scolaire. Pour les classes plus aisées, l'instruction primaire se donne dans la famille, dans le *home* ; l'instruction secondaire dans les *public schools* et les écoles préparatoires qui les précèdent. On me permettra de prendre seulement ces deux dernières catégories comme types de la tendance de l'éducation en Angleterre, puisque ce sont ces institutions qui, pour la plupart, servent de pépinière aux classes et aux individus destinés à jouer les rôles principaux dans l'administration de leur pays.

L'école de Bedales, de laquelle M. Demolins nous a donné une description attrayante, et qui paraît produire des résultats admirables, est, à tout prendre, sauf les différences inévitables dues à la valeur personnelle du directeur, à son énergie, à sa capacité, le résumé de l'esprit scolaire de l'Angleterre, dirigé vers un but spécial, et appliqué à un nombre assez restreint d'élèves pour qu'un seul directeur puisse suivre le développement individuel de chacun. La plupart des jeunes Anglais de bonne famille et de la classe moyenne supérieure sont élevés de la même manière. C'est-à-dire qu'à l'âge de neuf ou dix ans ils entrent dans un internat de petits garçons, qu'ils quittent vers l'âge de quatorze ans pour une *public school* où ils restent pendant six ou sept années, la plupart d'entre eux passant ensuite à l'Université d'Oxford ou de Cambridge.

Il y a en Angleterre un assez grand nombre d'écoles préparatoires du même type, c'est-à-dire dont le prix de pension est de 2,500 à 5,000 francs par an. Le nombre moyen d'élèves dépasse rarement la soixantaine. Elles sont toutes organisées à peu près de la même manière, à quelques différences près, car chacune de ces écoles est une entreprise particulière, où le directeur peut mettre à exécution ses théories spéciales en matière d'éducation. Il est évident cependant que la donnée générale des études doit être à peu près la même partout, car la plupart des directeurs de ces institutions se proposent comme but d'obtenir autant de *scholarships* (c'est-à-dire de bourses) que possible aux *public schools*. Je dirai ici que l'obtention d'une de ces bourses à la *public school*, aussi bien qu'à l'Université, est en Angleterre une marque de distinction, et que les jeunes gens de bonne famille concourent aussi bien que les autres. Obtenir un *scholarship* à Eton, ou à Winchester, est non seulement un brevet d'intelligence, mais un gage que celui qui l'a obtenu appartiendra à une petite bande d'élite, de travailleurs : qu'en somme, il prendra la vie peut-être un peu plus au sérieux que les autres, et ne s'occupera pas exclusivement de sports. Ce dernier trait, nous devons l'avouer, attire plutôt l'admiration de ses parents que de ses camarades. Quoiqu'il en soit, on ne peut nier que pour les parents des élèves la mesure de la capacité du directeur d'une école préparatoire ne soit souvent le nombre de *scholarships* obtenus aux *public schools*. Sous ces conditions, un certain " chauffage " devient inévitable, au moins pour les élèves les plus intelligents. Mais, à tout prendre, ils

sont rarement surmenés, car, dans la plupart des écoles préparatoires du type dont je parle, on soigne la santé des élèves et les exercices physiques avec une extrême attention. Ils sont bien nourris et bien tenus. Cette division de la vie de l'écolier en deux stages différents, correspondant à deux institutions différentes, de telle façon qu'à l'âge de douze ans il est un des " grands " de son école, un de ses chefs et de ses arbitres, présente la vie aux petits Anglais sous un aspect absolument différent de celle qu'elle offre à l'enfant qui entre à dix ans à l'institution d'où il ne sortira qu'à dix-neuf ans ; celui-ci sera par conséquent à l'âge de douze ou treize ans encore dans une condition d'infériorité et de rigoureuse subordination.

L'organisation des écoles préparatoires, toujours situées à la campagne, est portée à une haute perfection au point de vue de l'hygiène morale et physique. L'installation est pleine de confort, sinon de luxe ; les salles sont spacieuses, les salons bien meublés. Les chambres à coucher sont de grandes pièces aérées, où couchent un petit nombre de garçons, l'aîné d'entre eux étant responsable de la bonne tenue générale. Si le directeur est marié, sa femme s'occupe des élèves, préside la table pendant les repas, surveille l'infirmerie, etc. Il y a toujours en outre une femme de confiance d'un certain âge, la *matron*, chargée de veiller à l'entretien des vêtements des élèves, de surveiller les détails de leur santé quotidienne. Si le directeur n'est pas marié, il a ordinairement une *lady housekeeper*, dame qui dirige la maison, ayant, elle aussi, la *matron* sous ses ordres. Les enfants ont naturellement leur équipe de

football, de *cricket* ; et, détail à noter, tous les élèves doivent en faire partie. Il faut reconnaître qu'ils se livrent à ces exercices avec le plus grand plaisir. Le nombre de professeurs est assez considérable par rapport au nombre des élèves. Ils habitent soit sous le même toit qu'eux, soit dans le voisinage, et ils prennent part à tous les jeux des élèves aussi bien qu'à leurs études : natation, canotage, *cricket*, *football*, gymnase. Souvent, d'ailleurs, ils ont été choisis comme professeurs autant à cause de leurs prouesses athlétiques qu'à cause de leur savoir. Ici règne aussi, presque toujours, l'esprit de confiance qui est également la caractéristique des *public schools*. On ignore surtout la délation ; on s'efforce d'inculquer la loyauté et l'esprit de corps. Mais, comme ces écoles sont pour la plupart d'une fondation toute récente, nées dans cette génération même, il est évident qu'il ne peut pas y avoir une longue tradition comme dans les établissements plus anciens. Tout dépend donc de l'individualité, de la volonté du directeur, et il faut avouer que l'on rencontre parfois des directeurs méticuleux, soupçonneux, qui ne réussissent pas toujours à mener leur œuvre à bien.

Mais, à tout prendre, on peut dire que ce système fonctionne à merveille. Pour s'en assurer, on n'a qu'à visiter une de ces écoles, on n'a qu'à voir les ébats d'une foule de petits garçons solides, bien bâtis, à l'œil clair, au teint frais, qui courent joyeusement sous les arbres, sur la pelouse verte.

III

C'est à treize ou quatorze ans que les enfants sortent de l'école préparatoire pour entrer, avec des espérances dorées, dans la *public school*. Au point de vue moral, il semble y avoir un avantage à ce passage d'une petite école à une plus importante, à ce moment d'arrêt dans la routine de la vie, arrêt qui empêche l'ennui, l'uniformité de cette morne perspective d'années pendant lesquelles l'entourage, l'enseignement, les griefs, le costume même, resteront identiques. Elles ont assurément leur place dans le façonnement de la vie, ces pauses, ces jointures, pour ainsi dire, où, au commencement d'une nouvelle étape, on regarde autour de soi, on fait l'inventaire de sa vie, pour se remettre ensuite en chemin avec une nouvelle impulsion d'espoir. Pour les parents, les professeurs, le début de ce stage nouveau est une occasion de renouveler leurs conseils au jeune garçon sur le gouvernement de sa vie, sur la façon dont il doit employer la plus grande liberté qui l'attend à la *public school*, et sur la responsabilité qu'il aura bientôt à endosser. La responsabilité, voilà le thème qui revient sans cesse ; voilà le contrepoids essentiel. Dans le livre devenu classique qui offre un résumé de l'esprit des *public schools* de l'Angleterre, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, de Hughes, il y a une description de l'allocution adressée au petit Tom Brown, lors de son entrée à Rugby, par son père, gentilhomme campagnard de la vieille roche. Après avoir longtemps réfléchi et s'être bien tourmenté sur le prêche qu'il se sentait tenu de faire, le brave homme, au bout du compte,

se borna à dire : " Allons, mon garçon, dis toujours la vérité, et ne souffre pas en ta présence des propos que tu ne voudrais pas laisser entendre à ta mère ou à tes sœurs." C'était tout. Mais c'était assez. C'était un tracé du chemin à suivre qui encore aujourd'hui me semble complet et pratique.

En quittant la *private school*, l'élève a étudié l'arithmétique, le latin et les écritures saintes, ainsi que la géographie, la grammaire, l'histoire romaine et l'histoire détaillée de son propre pays ; il a commencé le grec, le français, et possède des notions d'algèbre, de musique et de dessin. Voilà, sauf les deux dernières matières, ce qui est nécessaire pour passer l'examen d'entrée à Eton. Il saura, en outre, quoique ceci ne fasse pas partie du cadre régulier de ses études, nager, jouer au *cricket*, jouer au *football*, et, en général, assez se débrouiller pour pouvoir se tirer d'affaire lorsque, en voyage ou autrement, il se trouvera livré à ses propres ressources.

A Eton, le jeune garçon est classé selon le résultat de l'examen d'entrée. Les classes sont ainsi partagées, en commençant par les plus basses :

Third Form.

Fourth Form, partagé en quatre divisions.

Remove.

Fifth Form, partagé également en trois divisions.

First Hundred.

Sixth Form, la classe la plus élevée, comprenant vingt élèves seulement, dix *Collegers* et dix *Oppidans*.

Il y a, en outre, une classe spéciale divisée en quatre sections, pour la préparation à l'armée, *the Army Class*, qui prépare aux examens d'entrée des académies militaires de Woolwich et de Sand-

hurst. Les succès récents des candidats d'Eton à ces examens très difficiles témoigne de l'excellence de l'enseignement.

L'élève moyen, à son entrée, est placé dans une des divisions de la *Fourth Form* ; il n'y a que ceux qui sont très en retard qui soient placés dans la *Third Form*. Sous peine d'être renvoyé, l'élève est obligé d'atteindre à un certain rang dans ses classes avant d'être arrivé à un âge donné. Cette limite d'âge est, pour la *Fourth Form*, de quatorze ans, pour la *Remove*, de quinze ans, pour la *Fifth Form*, de seize ans, pour la division supérieure de la *Fifth Form*, de dix-huit ans. Dans tous les cas, il ne doit pas rester à Eton après la fin du trimestre pendant lequel il a complété sa dix-neuvième année. Les élèves qui ont gagné des *scholarships* sont toujours placés, à leur entrée, dans la *Fifth Form*. Les *scholars* ou boursiers, qu'on appelle les *Collegers*, sont au nombre de soixante-dix ; ils habitent ensemble le bâtiment appelé le *College* proprement dit, où ils sont sous la surveillance d'un professeur appelé *Master in College*. Les autres élèves, au nombre de 970 environ, qu'on appelle *Oppidans*, les élèves de la ville, sont répartis dans les maisons des différents professeurs, système qui fait d'Eton une série de petits internats. Il y a en tout cinquante-six professeurs, dont vingt-six sont directeurs de maison. Chaque professeur, directeur de maison ou non, dirige une des classes, ou sections de classes, dont j'ai fait plus haut l'énumération. Les élèves de la *Sixth Form* sont dirigés par le *Head Master*, le directeur général, lui-même. En outre, chaque chef de maison est aussi répétiteur, ses élèves travaillent

avec lui les leçons, les devoirs, qu'ils ont à faire pour le *form master*, le maître de classe. En entrant à Eton, l'élève est libre de faire son choix également de la maison qu'il habitera et de son répétiteur. Pour les maisons les plus recherchées, il faut s'inscrire longtemps, plusieurs années, à l'avance. D'ordinaire, le professeur chez lequel habite l'élève est aussi son répétiteur, mais ceci n'est nullement obligatoire.

L'élève se trouvera ainsi dans des rapports très étroits d'intimité avec un même professeur pendant toute la durée de sa vie à la *public school*, ce qui assure une continuité d'influence. Il est probable que l'enfant sera, au bout d'un certain temps, dans des relations plus confidentielles avec lui qu'il ne pourrait l'être avec les professeurs des différentes classes entre les mains desquels il passe successivement en s'avançant dans les *Forms*. Un des *head masters* de Harrow, actuellement le chef du collège de la Trinité à Cambridge, a dit, en parlant de l'importance des rapports intimes entre les professeurs et les élèves : " Le moyen le plus exact de juger de la condition morale d'un jeune garçon, sauf dans quelques cas exceptionnels, c'est d'observer le développement de son intelligence." Je pense que tous ceux qui auront fait l'expérience de suivre attentivement pas à pas le développement graduel d'un caractère, depuis l'enfance jusqu'à l'adolescence, reconnaîtront la vérité de cette affirmation.

L'enfant nouvellement arrivé aura donc, au besoin, quelqu'un pour le défendre, si les élèves plus anciens lui font la vie trop dure. Le petit Anglais n'est pas enclin cependant à s'adresser à un

professeur pour le tirer d'affaire. C'est tout au plus si, au bout d'un certain temps, il osera faire appel au " grand " au service duquel il a été attaché en entrant, et dont il est le *fag*, c'est-à-dire l'acolyte spécial. Il faut expliquer ici que, par une coutume bizarre, une survivance de l'époque où la vie dans les *public schools* était bien autrement dure qu'elle ne l'est à présent, tout enfant qui entre à Eton plus bas que la *Fifth Form* doit être aux ordres, et en quelque sorte faire le service, des *upper boys*, c'est-à-dire de ceux de la *Sixth Form* et des dix premiers élèves de la *First Hundred*. Chacun de ces " grands " (je traduirai ainsi *upper boys*, en traduisant *lower boys* par " petits ") a son *fag* particulier, qui prépare son déjeuner le matin dans les maisons où les élèves sont chargés de fournir eux-mêmes ce repas ; il grille son pain, il fait bouillir l'eau pour faire son thé — heureux le *Sixth Form boy* qui n'a pas connu aux débuts de son *fag* le goût du thé fait à l'eau tiède ! — il fait des courses dans la ville, et il est en général à ses ordres pour les corvées qu'il voudra. De plus, en dehors de ce service particulier, tout *Sixth Form boy* a droit aux services de tout *lower boy* sur lequel il peut mettre la main. Cette coutume, qui assure une relation plus ou moins intime entre certains " petits " et certains " grands," n'est pas sans utilité, ni sans avantage, en ce que le " petit " a des droits à la protection spéciale de son *fag-master*.

Un mot ici sur la position de celui des " grands " qui se trouve être l'élève le plus ancien dans la maison qu'il habite. Il est le *Captain of the House*, le capitaine de la maison ; son autorité sur les

élèves plus jeunes que lui est absolue. Il est, pour ainsi dire, le délégué du *House-master*. C'est lui qui est responsable de la bonne conduite de ses camarades, c'est lui qui donne le ton, surtout si c'est un *Sixth Form boy*, être privilégié et vénéré. C'est bien ici qu'on voit l'étoffe dont un jeune homme est fait. On a dit bien souvent que pour savoir commander il faut savoir obéir. Il ne s'ensuit pas toujours que celui qui sait obéir saura commander, car il y a beaucoup de gens estimables prêts à se ployer à la discipline, à suivre l'initiative des autres, qui ne sont pas capables de prendre une initiative à leur tour, de se faire écouter, de se faire suivre. Ces dernières qualités cependant sont celles qui mènent au succès dans la vie. Si le *Captain of the House* est un de ceux qui les possèdent, il n'y a pas d'autorité plus respectée. Un écrivain distingué de nos jours, Sir Frederick Pollock, a dit : " Être dans la *Sixth Form*, et capitaine de sa maison, c'est quelque chose de grand. C'est une position qu'on pourrait comparer à celle d'un prince des Indes orientales, gouvernant son État sous l'égide de l'agent anglais, représenté par le *head master*."

En somme, ce système fonctionne bien. Il y a naturellement des exceptions, des cas où le *Captain*, le plus ancien de la maison, n'a pas les qualifications nécessaires pour se faire obéir. S'il est petit et faible au physique, s'il est peu courageux au moral, il n'aura pas sur ses camarades l'ascendant voulu, surtout s'il y a dans la maison quelques-uns de ces élèves qui sont les plus dangereux au point de vue de la morale et de la tenue, c'est-à-dire de ces grands garçons paresseux, occupant dans les classes

une position inférieure à leur âge et à leur taille, qui détournent les plus petits du droit chemin. Mais un professeur vigilant, s'il voit que le *Captain* n'est pas en état de maintenir l'ordre, n'en veillera que plus attentivement lui-même au salut de sa petite république. J'ai connu un chef de maison qui, voyant que le plus ancien pour le moment était un élève qui n'était pas assez fort, ni au moral ni au physique, pour maintenir l'ordre d'une main ferme, eut l'heureuse idée de lui adjoindre un camarade qui, quoiqu'il ne fût pas aussi élevé dans sa classe, avait les qualités voulues. Le résultat fut couronné de succès ; le professeur eut la satisfaction de voir les deux jeunes gens sortir de l'épreuve, leurs principes affirmés, leurs caractères développés par la tâche difficile qu'ils avaient eue à accomplir.

Il faut se rappeler que, dans les *public schools*, comme principe ordinaire, on a en horreur la délation, ce qui ajoute de beaucoup à la responsabilité du *Captain*. Ce sentiment est même souvent poussé trop loin, puisqu'il empêche le chef de maison de connaître certaines infractions au règlement. S'il venait à la connaissance d'un des "grands," ayant conscience de sa responsabilité, qu'un des petits violait en cachette le règlement, s'il fumait par exemple, ou faisait quelque chose qui fût absolument défendue, le " grand " ferait de son mieux d'abord pour y mettre ordre lui-même, mais s'il ne réussissait pas, il se sentirait obligé d'en référer au chef de maison. Mais on ne peut pas qualifier cela de délation : c'est plutôt un juste emploi de l'autorité déléguée par le professeur.

A Eton, on n'a recours que rarement aujourd'hui

au châtiment employé jadis si souvent vis-à-vis d'un élève reconnu coupable d'une faute grave : c'était le fouet, administré avec des verges par le directeur en présence d'un membre de la *Sixth Form* et de deux " petits."

Cette génération, je viens de le dire, a vu un grand changement dans les habitudes et l'organisation d'Eton au point de vue du confort, les partisans de l'ancien régime vous diront au point de vue du ramollissement, et vous parleront du beau temps où la vie du *public school boy* était une série de privations. Les élèves à Eton étaient obligés de suppléer à leurs maigres repas, surtout le matin, sous peine de n'avoir pas assez à manger. Quel que fût le temps, jamais un Eton *boy* n'aurait songé à mettre un paletot. A présent, l'esprit de réforme, si nous convenons de l'appeler ainsi, s'est glissé peu à peu dans les habitudes. A Eton, l'opinion publique permet de porter un paletot après la Saint-André, c'est-à-dire le 30 novembre. Dans presque toutes les maisons, les élèves prennent leur premier déjeuner ensemble et mangent un repas bon et suffisant au lieu d'aller l'acheter au dehors. Les Français s'étonnent volontiers de nous voir donner à nos enfants, filles et garçons, ce repas solide dès le matin. Il faut cependant se rappeler que, pendant l'enfance, ce repas prend, pour ainsi dire, la place de celui que les petits Français et Françaises font le soir. Nos enfants, après un repas assez solide vers une heure ou deux, prennent du thé avec du pain entre cinq et six heures, puis un souper léger avec du lait ou des farineux le soir, ce qui nous permet de les envoyer coucher de meilleure heure, et, en somme,

de leur faire passer les heures où ils sont éveillés et debout, au grand jour et non à la lumière.

Voici la journée habituelle d'un élève à Eton : à 7 heures, l'été, à 7h 30 les autres trimestres, il travaille en classe pendant une heure. Après cette classe, s'il n'habite pas une des maisons où l'on déjeune en commun, son *fag* lui apporte son déjeuner qu'il prend dans sa chambre ; à 9h 25, office dans la chapelle ; de 10h 30 à 11h 15, temps libre pour l'étude ou la récréation, à volonté ; de 11h 15 à midi, classe ; de midi à 2 heures, temps libre ; à 2 heures, le dîner en commun, présidé par le professeur dirigeant la maison et par les "grands" ; de 2 heures à 2h 45, temps libre ; de 2h 45 à 3h 30, classe ; de 3h 30 à 5 heures, temps libre ; de 5 heures à 6 heures, classe ; à 6 heures le thé. Trois fois par semaine, on travaille une heure pendant la soirée avec le *tutor*. A 9 heures, souper ; à 9h 30, prière en commun ; à 10h 30, les lumières doivent être éteintes.

Le lundi, le mercredi et le vendredi sont ce qu'on appelle *whole school days*, journées entières d'étude, c'est-à-dire que les élèves doivent travailler en classe pendant une partie de l'après-midi, de 2h 45 à 3h 30 et de 5h à 6h, soit une heure 3/4. Le mardi, le jeudi, le samedi l'élève n'est en classe que le matin. Ainsi trois fois par semaine, l'élève a quatre heures un quart de classe, et une heure de leçon particulière avec son professeur, c'est-à-dire cinq heures un quart d'étude avec les professeurs. Il lui reste donc une moyenne de cinq heures par jour pour l'étude préparatoire, pour la récréation, pour les repas et pour les études spéciales telles que la musique et le

dessin, non compris dans le cadre ordinaire des études. Il faut se rappeler qu'il n'y a pas ici d'heures d'étude surveillées ; l'élève peut faire ses devoirs quand et où il voudra, pourvu qu'il les fasse. Les heures que j'ai indiquées comme libres pourront donc être employées comme on le veut, à faire des versions grecques ou latines, à faire du canotage, à jouer au *cricket*, ou à ne rien faire du tout. En somme les élèves de cette génération à Eton travaillent mieux que leurs prédécesseurs, grâce à l'impulsion donnée par le directeur actuel.

Chacun d'eux a une chambre à lui, qui lui sert aussi de cabinet de travail. C'est une petite pièce assez confortable, de 3 mètres sur 4 environ, dans laquelle on réussit à faire entrer un lit, replié pendant le jour dans une espèce de cloison qui ne prend pas beaucoup de place, un bureau, une commode, une table de toilette, cachée pendant le jour par un couvercle en bois, un rayon pour les livres, un fauteuil. Tout cela fait une petite installation de marin, où chaque coin est utilisé, et qui n'est pas sans son charme. Surtout, cela donne l'impression d'un chez-soi, d'un coin où l'on peut se recueillir, jouir de sa liberté personnelle. Ce recueillement, il faut l'avouer, n'est pas, pendant les premiers temps surtout, inviolable. Il est convenu qu'on entre sans frapper les uns chez les autres, et que personne ne ferme sa porte à clef.

L'époque du *bullying* poussé à l'excès, c'est-à-dire de ce temps où les petits étaient malmenés et maltraités par les grands, auxquels ils n'osaient résister, est heureusement une chose du passé. Cet abus, comme beaucoup d'autres qui se trouvaient dans la

tradition d'Eton, s'est beaucoup modifié. De temps en temps, il y a probablement des abus d'autorité, mais en somme ceux-ci n'atteignent pas de grandes proportions.

J'ai sous les yeux en ce moment le journal publié à Eton, le *Eton Chronicle*, organe officiel du collège, écrit, publié, et rédigé par les élèves eux-mêmes, et fournissant des détails pleins d'intérêt sur l'Eton du passé et du présent. Je prends un numéro au hasard, le 1er du trimestre, qui donne comme un résumé de la situation. Le numéro commence par une liste de noms et d'emplois qui a tout l'air d'un ministère. Voici les emplois :

Captain of the School.
Captain of the Oppidans.
Captain of the Boats.
Captain of the Eleven.
President of the Eton Society.
Keepers of the Field.
Keepers of the Wall.
Keepers of the Racquet Courts.
President of the Literary Society.
Secretary of the Musical Society.

Si plus tard, arrivé à l'âge mûr, un de ces jeunes fonctionnaires d'Eton devient ministre pour tout de bon et membre du gouvernement, la responsabilité de sa position ne lui paraîtra pas plus lourde, sa gloire ne lui semblera pas plus brillante que la responsabilité et la gloire dont il a joui autrefois étant directeur du *cricket* ou du canotage à Eton.

Il faut se rappeler que ce ministère scolaire est élu par les élèves et non par les professeurs.

Le *Captain of the School* est à la tête de tous les élèves : c'est le premier des dix *Collegers* qui occupent les dix places supérieures dans la *Sixth Form*. Le *Captain of the Oppidans* est le premier des dix *Oppidans* qui forment l'autre moitié de la *Sixth Form*. Ces positions enviées sont données en partie au mérite, et en partie à l'ancienneté. Le *Captain of the Boats*, directeur du canotage, choisit les équipes des différents canots (il y en a neuf), et surtout l'équipe spéciale du canot représentant Eton, qui concourt à la régate de Henley et dirige en général l'athlétique.

Être le directeur du canotage est une position si brillante dans cette petite aristocratie que j'ai entendu dire à un père qu'il pensait sérieusement à faire rester son fils à Eton une année de plus, afin qu'il eût la possibilité d'être *Captain of the Boats*. Le père ajoutait très sérieusement : " C'est une chose immense, voyez-vous, que d'être directeur du canotage."

Le directeur actuel d'Eton a donné une forte impulsion à l'enthousiasme qui existait déjà pour le canotage. Lui aussi a été élevé à Eton ; il a été aussi un des membres de l'équipe du canot représentant Oxford, qui lutte toutes les années pour la possession de la Tamise contre le canot de Cambridge. Le directeur d'Eton exerce lui-même ces équipes. Pour un étranger, c'est un spectacle peut-être assez surprenant de voir ce professeur distingué, une des puissances sociales de l'Angleterre, souverain, autocrate absolu, s'il en fut jamais, accompagnant à pied

ou à cheval au bord de la Tamise les canots et leur criant ses critiques et ses observations. Ici, encore une fois, il faut remarquer qu'il n'est plus question d'un homme plus âgé voulant se mettre au point de vue des plus jeunes ; leur point de vue est le sien : les élèves en ont bien conscience. Ils savent que pour leur directeur il est aussi important que le canot Etonien remporte la victoire à Henley que pour le plus ardent des petits qui se précipitent en courant sur la rive, vociférant leur enthousiasme. C'est sans doute cette ardeur du directeur pour le canotage, aussi bien que sa prouesse personnelle (car avoir fait partie d'une des deux équipes universitaires est en Angleterre une marque de distinction pour la vie) qui a contribué à assurer la popularité de cet homme éclairé, une des illustrations de sa génération scolaire, au point de vue des études : il a remporté le *Newcastle Scholarship* pour lequel concourent chaque année les élèves les plus distingués. Inspiré par l'esprit d'une sage et courageuse réforme, il a su d'une main ferme, et sans fléchir devant l'opinion, opérer les réformes qui lui ont paru nécessaires pour corriger maints abus qu'on reprochait à son petit royaume. Les partisans les plus zélés d'Eton ne nieront pas, je pense, que ces réformes ne fussent bien nécessaires.

Le *Captain of the Eleven* est le chef du *cricket* ; il choisit les membres de l'équipe représentant Eton, qui prennent part au *match* annuel qui a lieu à Londres entre Eton et Harrow au mois de juillet, un des événements les plus importants de l'année scolaire. Chaque maison, aussi bien que le collège proprement dit, a en outre son équipe de *cricket*,

ainsi que de *football*, jeu qui consiste à lancer une balle avec le pied et à la faire passer entre deux poteaux situés sur le terrain de l'ennemi. Les directeurs du *football* s'appellent *Keepers of the Field*, eux aussi occupent des fonctions élevées et redoutables. Les *Keepers of the Wall* et les *Keepers of the Racquet Courts* sont également les directeurs de différentes variétés du jeu de balle.

La *Eton Society*, fondée en 1811, qui se réunit pour la discussion libre des questions du jour, est une assemblée à laquelle s'attache déjà un intérêt historique, puisque c'est là que maint orateur qui s'est plus tard distingué au Parlement a fait ses premières preuves. En feuilletant quelques numéros du *Eton Chronicle*, je prends au hasard les questions suivantes, qui ont été débattues à la *Eton Society* entre 1893 et 1898. Les discussions sont censées suivre la méthode parlementaire. Un des membres propose une question, un autre lui répond ; les autres membres prennent ensuite part à la discussion, puis on a recours aux voix pour adopter ou rejeter la question.

Parmi ces discussions, je trouve les sujets suivants, sans compter les questions vivement débattues de politique étrangère et intérieure du jour.

" Doit-on ouvrir les musées et les galeries le dimanche ? " Discussion assez faite pour étonner nos voisins d'outre-Manche, plus éclairés que nous à cet endroit. Les Etoniens ont eu le bon sens de voter " oui."

" Fait-on une part assez considérable à l'athlétique en Angleterre de nos jours ? " Les élèves ont répondu " oui."

" La vivisection est-elle une chose à désirer ? " Réponse, " oui."

" La civilisation a-t-elle manqué son but ? " Réponse, " non."

" Doit-il être permis à la police de se servir d'armes à feu ? " Réponse, " oui."

" La peine de mort doit-elle ou non être abolie ? " La majorité a été en faveur du maintien de la peine de mort.

" Est-ce que la crémation présente plus d'avantages que l'enterrement ? " Décidée affirmativement par une majorité d'une voix.

" Est-ce que la grève des artisans mineurs est justifiée ? " Réponse, " non."

Les professeurs sont admis par invitation spéciale aux délibérations de la Société aussi bien qu'à prendre part à la discussion qui suit ; c'est une innovation récente et heureuse.

IV

En somme, la condition actuelle d'Eton, au point de vue de la discipline aussi bien que des résultats intellectuels, est satisfaisante. Il est évident que là où il y a plus de mille jeunes gens âgés de douze ans à dix-neuf ans, il y en aura toujours une certaine proportion dont la conduite et la morale laissent à désirer. Mais ici la vie est arrangée de façon à réduire au minimum les dangers et les tentations propres à cette période.

Les élèves s'adonnent à de nombreux exercices en plein air, qui donnent un libre cours à leur vigoureuse énergie. S'ils jouissent, ainsi que nous l'avons indiqué, d'une assez grande liberté pendant

certaines heures de la journée, cette liberté est contrôlée par un règlement strict, mais sage en même temps.

J'ai été très frappée d'un trait consigné dans le livre si intéressant de M. Demolins, *L'Éducation Nouvelle*. Il signale la nécessité d'une permission écrite délivrée à l'élève qui quitte sa classe pour se rendre même auprès d'un professeur, permis sur lequel sont marquées l'heure et la minute même de la sortie de la classe et de la rentrée, afin que l'élève ne puisse flâner en route.

Les Anglais, au contraire, trouvent bon que les élèves aient la responsabilité de la liberté qu'on leur accorde libéralement, afin qu'ils sachent en faire un emploi légitime. Cette liberté est surveillée cependant par le règlement dont j'ai parlé. Il y a certaines limites bien définies dans Windsor et Eton que l'élève ne doit pas dépasser. La grande rue d'Eton et la grande rue de Windsor (ces deux villes séparées seulement par un pont sur la Tamise ne font en réalité qu'une seule) sont permises. Les rues transversales et latérales sont *out of bounds*, hors des limites. Dans ces limites, l'élève peut s'en aller droit devant lui pendant des milles, sauf à faire acte de présence au moment de l'appel général dans le *School Yard*, la grande place carrée entourée par les vieilles constructions collégiales. On peut être dispensé de l'appel par une permission spéciale accordée lorsque des parents de l'élève, ou des amis autorisés par eux, viennent en visite à Eton. Une fois pendant le trimestre, l'élève peut avoir *long leave*, c'est-à-dire une sortie de deux jours, du samedi jusqu'au lundi, mais seulement pour aller

dans sa famille. Il peut aussi avoir un *short leave*, congé pour une journée. Les élèves ont congé aussi pour aller à Londres les deux jours du *Cricket Match* de Eton contre Harrow, à Winchester pour le *Cricket Match* contre Winchester, à Henley pour la régate publique sur la Tamise à laquelle prennent part les canots des Universités et des *public schools* ; à Bisley pour le concours de tir : aussi pour prendre part aux *field days*, grandes manœuvres des corps réunis des volontaires de tous les *public schools*.

Notons en passant que ces régiments de *volunteers* sont formés de jeunes gens tirés de toutes les classes de la Société, depuis la pairie jusqu'à la classe ouvrière : ils s'enrôlent volontairement, ils font régulièrement l'exercice, ils sont soumis à la discipline, et ils formeraient au besoin un corps d'armée de 215,000 hommes environ.

Sur ces 215,000, 4,000 environ seraient fournis par les *public schools* et 1,000 par les Universités. Le régiment d'Eton comprend 300 volontaires, recrutés parmi les professeurs aussi bien que parmi les élèves.

Pour sortir le soir après que le collège est fermé (le *lock-up* a lieu à huit heures en été et, selon la saison, entre cinq et six heures les autres trimestres), il faut un permis spécial qui n'est accordé que pour les réunions, soit concerts, soit conférences, auxquelles les élèves sont autorisés à assister.

Le cadre d'études d'Eton (j'ai sous la main le programme officiel du trimestre courant) comprend les écritures saintes, le latin, le grec, l'histoire d'Angleterre, des notions générales de géographie, les mathématiques, le français et l'allemand alternant avec l'étude du grec. En outre, dans le *First*

Hundred, ce qui correspond, je pense, à l'entrée en rhétorique, il y a ce qu'on appelle les *extra studies*, c'est-à-dire des études spéciales hors du cadre ordinaire parmi lesquelles l'élève doit faire son choix. Il peut ou bien se spécialiser dans un des sujets qu'il a déjà étudiés, ce qui lui donne plus de chance d'obtenir un *scholarship* à l'Université, ou bien commencer l'étude d'un sujet tout à fait hors de cadre, qui ne lui servira pas à grand'chose peut-être pour passer ses examens, mais qui, d'un autre côté, le mettra à même de développer quelques aptitudes ou préférences spéciales. Un antiquaire célèbre, qui n'avait pas réussi dans ses études classiques, a dit qu'il a dû son penchant vers l'archéologie à ces heures d'étude spéciale avec son professeur qui, voyant son penchant, eut l'intelligence de lire avec lui de vieilles chroniques anglo-saxonnes.

La liste de ces *extra studies* comprend, outre les sujets déjà énumérés, la chimie, la physique, les sciences naturelles, l'électricité, la musique et le dessin. La musique prend une place assez considérable à Eton. Il y a un orchestre ainsi qu'une société d'orphéons recrutés parmi les élèves aussi bien que parmi les professeurs, des réunions musicales fréquentes, des concerts, etc.

Ce cadre d'étude n'a évidemment rien de bien utilitaire : à moins que l'élève ne se destine au professorat, ses études de littérature classique ne lui serviront pas de gagne-pain. D'un autre côté, il me semble que du moment où les études ne sont pas dirigées vers un but essentiellement pratique comme préparation à une carrière spéciale, le choix de ce qu'on doit apprendre ne peut être qu'arbitraire.

On se borne tout bonnement à apprendre ce que savent ou ce qu'ont su les autres, ce qui recule le problème mais ne le résout pas.

Un des défenseurs les plus ardents des études classiques à Cambridge a dit : " Il n'y a rien qu'il soit honteux de ne pas savoir en sortant d'une *public school* ; mais il y a beaucoup de choses qu'il est honteux de ne pas être en état d'apprendre vite et bien."

Une certaine proportion des élèves d'Eton en sortent ayant fait de brillantes études classiques, ayant assimilé ce qu'ils ont appris et en ayant profité ; d'autres, la majorité, en sortiront sachant tant bien que mal le latin, ayant quelques notions de géographie, de mathématiques, d'histoire, sachant un peu le français. Il y en aura encore une certaine proportion qui quitteront Eton ne sachant rien de ce qu'ils auraient dû apprendre pendant sept ans d'étude, peu capables de comprendre une allusion à l'art ou à la littérature. Mais cependant, ainsi que je l'ai déjà dit, ils auront été, eux aussi, façonnés à leur insu par ce qu'on leur aura fait péniblement lire et étudier pendant ces années. Au point de vue de ce qu'on apprend dans des livres, les élèves d'Eton sont comme le reste du genre humain : il y en a qui, lorsqu'ils entendent un nom célèbre dans l'histoire ou la littérature, ne se rappellent pas de l'avoir jamais entendu ; il y en a d'autres qui se contentent de le reconnaître sans savoir ce qu'il leur rappelle ; il y a une troisième catégorie pour laquelle ce nom représente toute une série d'idées vivantes. Ce n'est pas à cette dernière catégorie, je l'avoue, qu'appartient la majorité des Etoniens.

En revanche, cependant, ils sortent presque toujours de leur école sachant ce que signifient les mots justice, courage, loyauté ; ils ont appris à dire la vérité, à réprouver la délation, à se gouverner eux-mêmes aussi bien que les autres, et surtout à assumer et à porter la responsabilité. Ce seront, en somme, des hommes dont les actions seront gouvernées par un code honorable. Lancés plus tard dans la vie, n'importe de quel côté, — car les Etoniens embrassent les carrières les plus diverses, la colonisation, l'agriculture, le commerce, aussi bien que les professions libérales et la vie de fonctionnaire, — ils continueront à défendre (je ne dis pas que cela les rende chers à leurs voisins) les institutions de leur pays avec le même zèle qu'ils auront mis à défendre celles de leur école. Ils sauront se débrouiller, pour la plupart, avec énergie, avec décision, avec droiture. Voilà, en somme, ce que le *school boy* anglais, cet être singulier, moitié enfant, moitié homme, aura appris pendant ses années d'apprentissage. A défaut de connaissances intellectuelles, c'est déjà quelque chose — s'il est vrai que, ainsi que l'a dit le Père Didon : " L'éducation, c'est l'art d'émanciper les hommes."

Un Réformateur de l'École en Angleterre

THOMAS ARNOLD : SA VIE ET SON ŒUVRE

I

Thomas Arnold, dont le courage, la droiture, la puissante personnalité, la robuste foi ont exercé en Angleterre une influence qui subsiste encore aujourd'hui, était bien du bois dont on fait les grands réformateurs.

Né dans l'île de Wight en 1795, au moment où les péripéties d'une guerre maritime et l'activité de nos flottes nécessitaient un déplacement constant des vaisseaux autour de l'île, il se familiarisa de bonne heure avec les marines des nations étrangères, recevant une vive impression des relations internationales, tant du commerce que de la guerre. Cette phase de l'histoire contemporaine fut pour lui une frappante leçon de choses, qu'il n'oublia jamais, et qui l'aida à comprendre et à concevoir l'enchaînement de l'histoire. Ses jeunes années furent surveillées par une mère et une tante très pieuses. A l'âge de huit ans, envoyé, selon l'habitude des Anglais, dans un internat d'ancienne fondation, à Warminster, dans le Wiltshire, il eut le bonheur de se trouver sous l'influence d'un professeur avec lequel il conserva toute sa vie des relations d'amitié. A l'âge de douze ans, il entra à Winchester, la plus ancienne de nos *public schools*, où, une fois encore,

il eut la bonne fortune d'avoir pour *head master* un homme de bien.

Agé à peine de seize ans, il obtint une bourse à *Corpus Christi College*, à Oxford. A cette époque, ce collège ne comprenait que vingt agrégés, vingt-quatre boursiers et un nombre très restreint de licenciés, une demi-douzaine à peine. Au moment où Arnold fit pour la première fois partie de cette petite société, dont les relations devaient nécessairement être intimes, il y trouva un groupe d'esprits d'élite dont plusieurs devinrent ses amis pour la vie, entre autres Keble, le célèbre théologien, et Sir John Coleridge, plus tard une des illustrations du barreau anglais. Ce dernier nous a laissé une description des rapports d'Arnold avec ses camarades à l'Université ; elle montre combien était profonde l'impression produite par son individualité et son intelligence, malgré son extrême jeunesse, sur ceux qui étaient en relations quotidiennes avec lui. Ses opinions sur les questions du jour étaient certes faites pour étonner ses compagnons. Déjà enclin à révoquer en doute la sagesse de bien des choses qu'on acceptait sans discussion au sujet de l'organisation de l'Église et de l'État, Arnold abordait volontiers tous les sujets, raisonnait, plaidait avec véhémence, quitte à prendre en bonne part l'opposition souvent suscitée par ses opinions. Arnold était sensible au plaisir et au profit de ces causeries prolongées, qui eurent leur part dans la consolidation des amitiés de toute sa vie. Il a dit lui-même, en parlant de cette période de sa vie : " Les bienfaits que j'ai reçus des amitiés contractées à Oxford m'ont été tellement précieux qu'il est impossible

que je les oublie jamais." Sir John Coleridge, dont nous avons parlé plus haut, a aussi écrit dans le même sens : " Quiconque sait apprécier avec justesse les événements de sa vie, pour le bien ou pour le mal, s'accordera avec moi à dire que ce qu'il y a de plus important, après la rectitude de notre propre carrière et le choix d'une compagne pour la vie, ce sont les amitiés formées dans la jeunesse. C'est la saison où les natures douces et sensibles se rapprochent, se fondent l'une dans l'autre, se colorent réciproquement. Se sentir en rapport complet avec une âme pieuse, élevée, généreuse, c'est recevoir soi-même une impulsion vers ce qui est pieux, élevé et généreux. Mon amitié avec Arnold a été une des jouissances de ma vie."

Ordonné prêtre à l'âge de vingt-trois ans, marié deux ans après, il fut nommé vicaire (*curate*) de l'église de Laleham, petit village de campagne situé près de la Tamise. Ce fut là que, d'abord associé à son beau-frère, ensuite seul, il commença la carrière de professeur, ayant un petit nombre d'élèves âgés de dix-sept à vingt ans. Les années suivantes, passées au milieu d'occupations agréables, dans un isolement propre à la réflexion et au recueillement, furent de la plus grande importance pour Arnold au point de vue de son développement moral. La conscience d'avoir lui-même assumé la responsabilité du professeur, de devoir à son tour diriger la jeunesse au lieu d'être dirigé par les autres, la propagande du bien et de l'utile gouvernée par l'esprit d'une ardente religion qu'il se sentit appelé à faire, tout cela consolida et affermit ses propres

principes et lui traça une ligne de conduite dont il ne se départit plus jamais.

Ce fut ici aussi qu'il se rendit compte de sa véritable vocation qui était l'enseignement. Il n'est pas étonnant que les débuts de sa carrière aient été éclipsés depuis par la grande œuvre qu'il accomplit à Rugby ; ce fut cependant à Laleham qu'il donna les premières preuves de son aptitude à stimuler et à inspirer la jeunesse. Un de ses élèves de Laleham a dit : " Le secret de la puissante influence exercée par Arnold comme professeur tenait à ce qu'il nous faisait comprendre la valeur sérieuse de la vie." Il est bien évident qu'ici, comme plus tard, le but qu'Arnold se proposait n'était jamais celui du pédagogue qui désire s'illustrer lui-même par les succès retentissants obtenus par l'un ou l'autre de ses élèves. Il savait respecter, encourager l'élève persévérant, travailleur, heureusement doué ou non, qui s'appliquait à l'étude avec courage et loyauté. Ce respect, cet encouragement, donnait au jeune homme la conviction de pouvoir viser au moins à une honorable utilité, si non à des résultats plus brillants. Ce fut à l'âge de trente-trois ans qu'Arnold fut élu *head master* de Rugby, remportant le poste sur plusieurs concurrents, grâce à la recommandation du Dr Hawkins, prévôt du Collège d'Oriel, à Oxford. Hawkins, ayant continué à suivre des yeux la carrière du jeune homme dont la personnalité l'avait si vivement impressionné à Oxford, envoya au conseil d'administration chargé de l'élection une lettre dans laquelle il prédisait que si Arnold était élu directeur de Rugby, l'éducation dans

toutes les *public schools* de l'Angleterre serait transformée.

Nous avons vu s'accomplir cette prophétie.

II

Au moment des débuts d'Arnold à Rugby, la condition des *public schools* chargées de l'éducation des classes supérieures avait suscité une désapprobation sourde et générale, sans que personne eût pu mettre le doigt sur la plaie, ou en suggérer le remède. Cette condition laissait à désirer autant au point de vue de la morale qu'à celui de la culture intellectuelle. Sous ce dernier rapport, le cadre trop restreint des études classiques, auxquelles on n'adjoignait presque pas d'autre instruction, était critiqué avec véhémence par le parti libéral comme inutile et infructueux. Dans les écoles, dues pour la plupart à la munificence de riches particuliers, fondées en Angleterre au seizième siècle lorsque l'Europe était encore sous le charme de la Renaissance, le cadre des études était presque exclusivement basé sur l'étude du grec et du latin, les grands penseurs et les grands écrivains s'étant exprimés jusqu'à cette époque en ces deux langues. Ce même cadre, au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle, subsistait encore, quoique les siècles qui s'étaient écoulés depuis ces fondations eussent vu naître une autre littérature en Europe.

Lorsque Dean Colet fonda, au seizième siècle, la grande école de St. Paul's, aujourd'hui à Hammersmith, il résuma son code en ces mots : " Enjoignez

aux maîtres qu'ils enseignent toujours ce qu'il y a de mieux : les enfants doivent apprendre le grec et le latin." Enseigner ce qu'il y a de mieux — on ne pourrait en dire davantage, n'importe à quelle époque. Au seizième siècle, ce qu'il y avait de mieux se trouvait dans la littérature classique. Les *public schools* n'ayant pas changé leur cadre pendant trois siècles, il s'ensuivait que le jeune Anglais de bonne famille né au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle n'avait pas d'autre moyen d'éducation que celui d'étudier, d'une façon plus ou moins imparfaite, les langues classiques. Nous reviendrons sur ce sujet plus loin en traitant du cadre des études à Rugby.

Quant à l'instruction morale, aussi bien que religieuse, on peut dire qu'il n'y en avait presque pas. Une réforme de ce système paraissait inévitable aux gens sérieux. Mais une réforme à entreprendre dans un champ aussi vaste semblait présenter des difficultés presque insurmontables. C'est à ce moment qu'Arnold fut élu directeur de Rugby. Cette école représentait, en somme, les types contemporains, mais elle était plus accessible à la réforme que les Collèges d'Eton ou de Westminster. Quoique le prédécesseur d'Arnold, le Dr Wooll, " parfait gentilhomme et fort sur la discipline," selon le signalement qui nous a été transmis par un de ses élèves, ait introduit des améliorations dans l'école, et ait fait atteindre le maximum au chiffre des élèves, il n'avait pas l'initiative d'un réformateur. Quoiqu'il ait fait beaucoup pour améliorer le cadre de l'instruction, la condition des professeurs et l'état des bâtiments scolaires, il laissa persister bien des abus. Le système des *boarding-houses*, c'est-à-dire des

maisons dans lesquelles les élèves logeaient chez des personnes qu'on ne rendait pas responsables de la bonne conduite de leurs locataires, ne pouvaient manquer d'amener de mauvais résultats. Dans les *boarding-houses*, dans l'école même, dans tous les détails de la vie quotidienne, il n'y avait presque pas de surveillance. Il n'était pas rare que des armes à feu, des chiens de chasse même, fussent cachés dans les cabinets de travail par les élèves amateurs de sport ; d'autres avaient des caves à vin. L'élève croyait faire preuve de vigueur, de virilité, en buvant, en jurant, en bravant l'autorité ; parfois même il leur arrivait de se joindre les uns aux autres et de se mettre en campagne pour piller les basses-cours des fermiers du pays ou pour se battre avec les gardes champêtres des voisins dont ils envahissaient les domaines.

Lorsque Arnold se décida à accepter la direction de Rugby, il s'était bien rendu compte de la nécessité où il se trouverait d'entreprendre des réformes tranchantes et vigoureuses. Le système d'après lequel l'élection des directeurs de nos *public schools* se trouve dans les mains d'un conseil d'administration, composé de nobles et de gentilshommes campagnards du pays ne s'intéressant pas toujours spécialement à l'éducation, peut nécessairement ajouter aux difficultés de cette position. Le *head master* est chef absolu, autocrate de son petit royaume, quoique responsable pour la forme vis-à-vis du conseil d'administration.

Lors de son élection, Arnold fit comprendre aux douze membres du conseil qu'il entendait être absolument libre de gouverner son école comme

bon lui semblerait, quitte à eux, en cas de mécontentement, de le renvoyer. A cette condition, il accepta la direction, continuant son chemin de pied ferme à travers les préjugés de son entourage, sans faire attention ni à la désapprobation, ni à l'impopularité qu'il suscita à ses débuts. La constitution particulière et individuelle de chaque *public school* en Angleterre, l'absence de toute organisation centrale, permet à celui qui a le véritable don de l'enseignement d'expérimenter, de faire des essais qu'il peut arriver à mener à bien avec un éclatant succès.

Le vif intérêt que prenait Arnold aux affaires publiques donnait à sa direction un cachet tout particulier. Plusieurs de ses admirateurs aussi bien que ses adversaires regrettaient qu'il eût des vues aussi prononcées sur la politique et les questions du jour. " Il est dommage," disaient les uns, " que celui qui était capable d'être homme d'État soit destiné à instruire et à diriger des écoliers." " Il est malheureux," disaient les autres, " que le directeur de Rugby s'occupe de polémique." Mais ce fut, sans doute, cette robuste et constante participation à la vie de ses compatriotes qui contribua à l'accomplissement de son œuvre, qui empêcha son point de vue d'être circonscrit par les bornes étroites de la pédagogie. Ici il n'est plus question du danger des internats, signalé par Taine, " la disconvenance de l'école et de la vie." Pour Arnold, l'école devait être cette vie même en miniature. Il administrait les affaires d'une école comme il aurait administré celles d'une nation, les règles de conduite étant à ses yeux les mêmes pour l'une et pour l'autre.

Carlyle, très frappé de la vie et de l'organisation de Rugby, qu'il visita plus d'une fois, et qui lui parut, selon ses propres paroles, comme " un temple de la paix laborieuse," a dit : " l'école, c'est un État au dedans de l'État."

Pénétré d'une vive sympathie pour les classes ouvrières, Arnold tâcha d'inspirer à ses élèves des classes aisées la conscience de leurs obligations envers ceux qui étaient moins heureusement partagés, du citoyen éclairé envers celui que les circonstances ont privé d'éducation. Ce fut sa propagande zélée à cet endroit qui posa les premiers jalons du mouvement qui de nos jours a pris des proportions aussi considérables, les *settlements*, établissements où des jeunes gens de l'Université s'installent pendant une certaine période pour travailler parmi les pauvres.

Arnold encourageait volontiers les jeux : le *football*, le *cricket*, les *fives*, etc., quoiqu'il y prît rarement part, et ne voulut pas qu'on les exagérât.

Il encourageait les élèves à s'occuper de l'histoire naturelle, à laquelle il s'intéressait beaucoup lui-même, de la géologie, de n'importe quel passe-temps de ce genre qui pût leur servir plus tard de ressource ou de récréation durant leurs moments de loisir.

III

Les directeurs des *public schools* en Angleterre appartiennent presque toujours à l'ordre ecclésiastique ; cet usage date de l'époque où l'instruction était concentrée dans l'église. Il faut se rappeler cependant que le *clergyman* qui dirige une grande

école en Angleterre est dans une position toute différente de celle du directeur d'un collège religieux dans un pays catholique. La position du *clergyman* anglais se rapproche, dans ses relations avec ses élèves et dans sa façon d'envisager la vie extérieure, de celle du chef d'une institution laïque plutôt que de celle du prêtre. Un directeur d'école dont la carrière a réussi, finit presque toujours par arriver à l'épiscopat. Deux des archevêques récents de Canterbury, primats d'Angleterre, ont été directeurs de Rugby, un troisième, directeur de Wellington. On pourrait multiplier les exemples. Il y a peut-être certains désavantages à ce système, qui peut avoir pour résultat de combiner, pour ainsi dire, les ambitions, les points de vue, de deux carrières ; d'un autre côté, il y a des avantages incontestables à ce que le *head master* appartienne à l'église. La position, la dignité du *clergyman* lui donnent tout d'abord une influence morale sur ses élèves. Le *clergyman* a de plus entre ses mains un moyen inestimable de répandre l'instruction morale et religieuse par les sermons qu'il prêche, par l'office qu'il conduit, dans la chapelle de l'école. Les sermons prêchés chaque semaine par Arnold dans la chapelle de Rugby, à la portée des plus jeunes qui l'écoutaient, étaient un élément bien important dans ses rapports avec ses élèves. Son attitude envers la jeunesse qui l'entourait se résume entièrement dans l'exorde d'un sermon prêché sur les tentations de la vie d'école, sur un texte tiré de la première épître aux Corinthiens, I, xiii, 11. " *Quand j'étais enfant je parlais comme un enfant, je jugeais comme un enfant, je*

pensais comme un enfant ; mais lorsque je suis devenu homme, j'ai quitté ce qui tenait de l'enfant." " Ces paroles," disait-il, " nous expliquent pourquoi tant de discours prononcés en chaire à cette époque et dans ce pays produisent si peu d'effet sur l'auditoire. Ce sont les paroles d'un homme mûr qui parle et pense d'une façon, adressées à des personnes qui parlent et pensent d'une autre. Il n'y a que l'expérience de la vie qui puisse nous enseigner quelles sont les barrières élevées par l'âge, l'éducation, le genre de vie, entre une classe et une autre, de sorte que les pensées les plus naturelles, les plus familières pour les uns sont étranges, incompréhensibles pour les autres. Vous savez très bien que vos fautes ne sont pas celles que vous décrivent les livres que vous avez l'habitude de lire, car ces livres sont écrits par des hommes faits, et s'adressent pour la plupart à eux ; il y est donc plutôt question des fautes et des tentations de l'âge viril que de celles de la jeunesse. Mais je me propose de vous parler, à vous, des dangers, des tentations qui vous menacent à l'heure qu'il est ; si mon langage est simple et familier, peu importe ; je désire m'exprimer de façon que les plus jeunes d'entre vous me puissent comprendre." Il est facile de s'imaginer quel devait être l'effet de cette éloquence simple et virile, dépourvue également de rhétorique et de controverse. Nous retrouvons dans la biographie d'Arnold la description de l'influence exercée par ces sermons sur les plus étourdis, les moins accessibles de ses élèves.

Il avait cru devoir conserver l'usage séculaire de punir avec les verges, se refusant absolument à trouver dans cette punition appliquée aux très

jeunes garçons, rien d'humiliant. Il se bornait cependant à l'employer en cas d'offenses graves, le mensonge, l'ivrognerie, la mauvaise conduite. Il était d'une sévérité inflexible envers le mensonge. Il se faisait néanmoins un point d'honneur de croire un élève sur parole, sur sa simple affirmation, confiance qui, peu à peu, engendra ce dicton : " C'est une honte de ne pas dire la vérité à Arnold. Il vous croit toujours." Ce sentiment prit racine et se répandit peu à peu dans l'école. Mais cette réforme, comme les autres, ne s'accomplit pas immédiatement.

IV

Les premières années passées par Arnold à Rugby devaient nécessairement être une période de difficultés et de tâtonnements. Il avait résolu dès le début, guidé par son jugement sain et pratique, par son coup d'œil sagace d'homme d'État, de se servir du matériel, des institutions, qu'il avait sous la main, plutôt que d'en créer d'autres. Mais cependant, ainsi qu'il l'avait prévu, il se trouva dans la nécessité d'entreprendre bien des réformes, bien des modifications inévitables, ce qui produisit au début une succession de changements qui parurent excessifs à beaucoup de ses contemporains, comme devant mettre en danger la stabilité de l'école. On a dit de lui, en parlant de cette phase de sa carrière : " Il ouvre les yeux chaque matin en se disant qu'il n'y a rien qui ne soit susceptible de discussion." Mais cette attitude ne s'appliquait qu'aux détails de son administration, et non aux principes sur

lesquels elle était basée. S'il formait sans cesse de nouveaux projets, il imprimait pourtant à ceux qui collaboraient avec lui la conviction que, quels que fussent les avantages ou les désavantages de la question dont on s'occupait pour l'instant, ces projets reposaient tous sur des principes qui ne variaient jamais.

Arnold qui, ainsi que nous l'avons dit plus haut, sut se gagner la profonde affection, le dévouement passionné de ses proches, de ses amis, de son entourage, ne cherchait pas à se concilier les suffrages par les agréments du diplomate. Sa personnalité, dépourvue de liant, manquait peut-être de charme dans le sens particulier du mot. Sa conscience du sérieux, de la gravité de la vie et du devoir, donnait à son aspect une sévère austérité qui inspirait la crainte à beaucoup de ses élèves, surtout parmi les plus jeunes. Vigoureux et intransigeant dans ses méthodes, il était impossible qu'il ne suscitât pas d'abord l'opposition et l'animosité de beaucoup de gens tant par son administration de l'école que par ses opinions très nettement accusées sur les questions du jour. Mais il y a dans la force du caractère, dans l'intégrité, la loyauté, la droiture absolue de vie et d'action, une influence qui, à la longue, se fait toujours sentir. Il était impossible que la générosité et la fermeté de ses rapports avec les autres, son dévouement au devoir, ainsi que la promptitude avec laquelle, une fois convaincu qu'il avait tort, il reconnaissait son erreur, n'eussent pas pour résultat de conquérir cette véritable popularité, la seule digne d'être obtenue, qu'on n'atteint jamais lorsqu'on vise à l'obtenir. Sa noble humilité, sa

candeur absolue à l'endroit de son propre savoir excitaient d'abord la surprise de ses élèves, ensuite leur respect. Il n'hésitait jamais à reconnaître qu'il y avait telle chose qu'il ne savait pas. Ses sujets préférés étaient l'histoire, la géographie, la théologie, les langues et la littérature. En dehors de ce cadre, il reconnaissait franchement que les autres en savaient plus que lui, enseignant à ses élèves, par l'exemple aussi bien que par le précepte, qu'on doit avoir le courage d'avouer qu'on ignore certaines choses, et qu'il est méprisable de prétendre savoir ce qu'on ne sait pas. Son attitude envers ses collègues dans l'enseignement, un des côtés les plus difficiles de l'administration d'une école, finit par les gagner corps et âme. On a dit de lui : " Son but était d'abord de s'entourer de subalternes dignes de confiance, puis d'avoir confiance en eux." Ce n'est que le despote conscient de sa faiblesse qui craint d'émanciper ses subordonnés, de même qu'il n'y a qu'un gouvernement solidement assis qui ose laisser la main libre aux organisateurs des grandes écoles. Arnold n'était pas homme à craindre d'encourager la liberté, l'indépendance, parmi ses collègues, s'assurant ainsi leur cordiale coopération.

En ce qui regardait la discipline de l'école il n'agissait presque jamais sans les consulter. Toutes les trois semaines, on réunissait un conseil pour discuter les affaires de l'administration. Chacun était libre d'exprimer son opinion, de proposer une mesure quelconque, pourvu que celle-ci fût en accord avec les principes fondamentaux de l'institution. Il arrivait même assez souvent que la majorité des voix était opposée à celle du directeur qui,

cependant, se réservait le droit, le cas échéant, de passer outre.

Les *boarding-houses* dont nous avons déjà parlé, maisons où logeaient les élèves, rentraient, à mesure qu'elles devenaient disponibles, sous la direction des différents professeurs. Chaque maison devait, pour ainsi dire, résumer l'école entière. C'était pour Arnold un devoir indispensable de connaître personnellement tous les élèves, quoique ce ne fût que vis-à-vis du *Sixth Form* (la classe supérieure) qu'il prît une part active à l'enseignement. Il se bornait, quant aux plus jeunes, aux examens généraux, et à deux leçons hebdomadaires consacrées successivement à chaque classe. Mais la source principale de son influence morale et intellectuelle sur l'école était celle qu'il exerçait si puissamment sur le *Sixth Form*, qu'il enseignait lui-même. " Convaincu," — je cite ses propres paroles, — " de la valeur des relations spéciales qui existent entre la classe la plus élevée d'une grande *public school* et les autres élèves," il résolut tout d'abord de se servir, en l'améliorant autant que possible, du mécanisme actuel du *Sixth Form* et du *fagging*. Le *Sixth Form*, c'était les trente élèves composant la classe la plus élevée. Ils devaient être supérieurs à la fois par l'âge, la force, et l'intelligence ; et, pour peu que l'école fût bien organisée, les plus méritants au point de vue de l'application et du caractère. Le *fagging*, c'était le pouvoir sur les plus jeunes, délégué par la direction au *Sixth Form* afin d'assurer un gouvernement bien assis parmi les élèves eux-mêmes et d'empêcher la tendance vers l'anarchie et l'abus de la force

physique. Très convaincu que ce qu'il y avait de mauvais ou de répréhensible dans la conduite des élèves devait être réprimé par eux-mêmes plutôt que par les maîtres, il accorda au *Sixth Form*, concession qui lui était reprochée par ses adversaires, le droit d'infliger des punitions même corporelles à ceux qui résistaient à leur autorité, pourvu que cette autorité fût sagement exercée. Ils arrivaient à comprendre qu'ils étaient associés avec lui dans l'administration de leur école, qu'ils en partageaient avec lui la responsabilité. Rien, en conséquence, ne lui causait autant d'inquiétude que des preuves de faiblesse et d'inconduite dans le *Sixth Form*. " Vous devriez sentir," leur disait-il, " la responsabilité, en même temps que le courage, d'officiers de l'armée ou de la marine qui devraient être incapables de lâcheté au moral comme au physique." — " Lorsque j'ai confiance dans le *Sixth Form*," disait-il encore, " il n'y a pas de position en Angleterre pour laquelle je changerais celle que j'occupe, mais s'ils ne me soutenaient plus, il ne me resterait qu'à donner ma démission." Le résultat de cette confiance était de donner aux élèves du *Sixth Form* la conviction que leur dignité, leur position, dépendait de leur bonne conduite. Être digne de cette classe et de ses traditions constituait une règle de conduite à la hauteur de laquelle les membres s'efforçaient de se maintenir. Citons encore les paroles d'Arnold : " La classe supérieure devrait être pour ainsi dire à mi-chemin entre les professeurs et la grande masse des élèves, capable de recevoir et de transmettre les exemples de bonne conduite et de principes élevés. Comme conséquence logique de cette conviction,

lorsqu'il voyait arriver au *Sixth Form* des élèves incapables de recevoir et de transmettre les bons exemples, il refusait de les garder plus longtemps, ce qui souleva contre lui dans les premiers temps une critique assez acérée. Mais il tint ferme. " Si nous ne parvenons pas à nous convaincre," disait-il, " que le devoir du maître d'école est en premier lieu, en second lieu, en troisième lieu de se défaire de sujets ingrats, une grande *public school* ne sera jamais ce qu'elle pourrait être et ce qu'elle devrait être." Cette élimination des élèves avait lieu, cependant, aussi peu bruyamment que possible. S'il n'était pas question d'offenses graves, au lieu de renvoyer l'élève en public, on le priait tout simplement à la fin du trimestre de ne plus revenir. Mais cette mesure même qu'il se sentait obligé de prendre dénote l'intérêt personnel, la responsabilité qu'Arnold ressentait vis-à-vis de tous ses élèves. Les lettres nombreuses qui nous restent au sujet de la carrière subséquente des uns et des autres élèves renvoyés de Rugby en font preuve. Il savait que maint adolescent auquel les méthodes d'une *public school* n'ont pas réussi peut tourner à bien dans la famille, ou sous la surveillance d'un professeur. Observateur très fin, il suivait attentivement le développement moral de ses élèves, notant surtout quels étaient leurs camarades préférés. Il savait quelle était l'influence exercée par ces amitiés de collège, et plus d'un élève qui tendait à s'écarter du droit chemin y a été ramené à son insu par l'influence d'un condisciple qu'Arnold, de propos délibéré, lui avait donné au moment critique comme compagnon de chambre ou de travail.

Un livre très célèbre, publié en 1856, lu et relu avidement depuis par la jeunesse anglaise de chaque génération, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, de Hughes, nous a donné des descriptions prises sur le vif de la vie à Rugby sous le régime du Dr Arnold. Il nous sera permis de dire, cependant, que ces descriptions sont tant soit peu partiales, étant faites exclusivement du point de vue de la troupe révoltée, étourdie, qui formait la majeure partie de l'école. Mais ce point de vue même ajoute à l'intérêt du livre, en montrant l'influence exercée par Arnold sur les plus écervelés de ses élèves. Voici, tirée de *Tom Brown*, la description de l'état d'esprit de l'élève ordinaire, insouciant, au moment d'entrer dans le Sixth Form. " Il se mit à la hauteur de la situation : il brûla ses étuis à cigares, jeta ses pistolets, et se mit à réfléchir sur l'autorité constitutionnelle de la classe supérieure, sur ses nouveaux devoirs envers son directeur, les classes inférieures et les *fags*." Et voilà le jeune révolté rangé, pour le moment du moins, dans le parti de la loi et de l'ordre, quitte à avoir moins de conscience de sa responsabilité lorsqu'il aura quitté Rugby. Mais c'était au moins un pas de fait dans le bon chemin.

Je cite encore un témoignage, tiré cette fois non d'un livre, mais de la vie réelle, celui d'un élève qui n'arriva pas à entrer dans le *Sixth Form* et qui, en conséquence, ne se trouva jamais en relations très suivies avec Arnold : " Je l'aimais, je le révérais comme un être d'une bonté, d'une grandeur d'âme qui imposait au plus haut degré. J'avais foi en l'œuvre que je devais accomplir pour lui : pour lui, je travaillais à rendre meilleurs les camarades que

je fréquentais." Si un élève qui n'avait pas été en relations personnelles avec Arnold pouvait s'exprimer ainsi, on croira sans peine quelle devait être l'ardeur que le maître inspirait à la petite bande dévouée de lieutenants qui composaient le *Sixth Form*, travaillant avec lui et pour lui.

Mais pour apprécier dans sa plénitude l'influence exercée par Arnold sur les élèves d'une nature plus élevée, mieux doués au point de vue de la morale et de l'intelligence, il faut lire sa biographie écrite par son élève préféré, Arthur Stanley, plus tard Dean de Westminster, biographie qui est un monument durable et pour celui qui l'a écrite et pour celui qui en est l'objet. Ici, effectivement, on voit un autre aspect de Rugby : la bande d'élèves dont Stanley faisait partie comprenait des esprits supérieurs dont plusieurs se firent plus tard très remarqués. Stanley voua à Arnold un culte qui dura toute sa vie. Alors que, sa carrière à Rugby terminée, il va quitter son maître pour entrer à Oxford, il parle de " la fin de ces relations bénies, ravissantes, que j'eus avec lui pendant trois ans à Rugby, où j'appris les connaissances humaines et divines comme je ne les apprendrai jamais plus." Il est intéressant de noter que lorsque *Tom Brown* parut, Stanley, en le lisant, fit cette remarque : " Voici la description d'un état de choses que j'ignorais absolument." Mais au bout du compte il est évident que l'élève, qu'il fût un jeune barbare plein de santé, de vigueur, de générosité comme Tom Brown, ou un enfant nerveux, sensible, doué de génie comme Arthur Stanley, subissait également l'influence de son chef.

V

Quant au cadre même de l'instruction, Arnold n'y apporta pas de modifications très profondes. Ce fut sa manière d'enseigner, son élan, sa verve, qui opérèrent une transformation puissante. Il avait certains principes d'enseignement, il est vrai, qui marchaient de pair avec ses théories de l'éducation morale. Mais quoique ces principes aient été transmis à ses imitateurs et par eux mis à exécution, le secret de l'impulsion qu'il sut donner aux études de ses élèves était celui de sa propre personnalité. Il apportait à la classe qu'il enseignait la conviction qu'il travaillait avec eux aussi bien que pour eux, que c'était pour lui-même un intérêt toujours ardent, toujours renouvelé, de saisir la véritable portée du passage, s'il était question d'une traduction, ou s'il s'agissait de l'histoire de se rendre compte de la portée des développements historiques sur la vie actuelle. Ce qu'il cherchait, c'était à éveiller l'intelligence de chacun de ses élèves. Sa méthode favorite d'enseignement était de questionner, de faire parler l'élève lui-même, ses propres explications étant aussi courtes que possibles. L'élève devait avoir une opinion à lui, former ses propres conclusions et non se contenter de celles des autres. Montaigne, dont l'esprit moderne avait devancé de si loin son époque, avait formulé, près de trois siècles auparavant, la même théorie : " Je ne veux pas que le maître invente et parle seul, je veux qu'il écoute son disciple parler à son tour : qu'il ne lui demande pas compte des mots de sa leçon, mais du sens et de la substance, et qu'il juge

du profit qu'il aura fait, non par le témoignage de sa mémoire, mais par celui de son jugement."

Arnold disait souvent qu'un professeur devait, par ses propres études, se maintenir constamment à un niveau plus élevé que celui de ses élèves. Une autre de ses théories favorites était que tout professeur, comme tout élève, devait avoir soit une étude, soit une occupation qui primât toutes les autres. Il savait combien est contagieux l'enthousiasme avec lequel un professeur aborde son sujet préféré. Il en donnait bien la preuve lui-même. Sa prédilection pour l'histoire, aidée par sa réelle érudition et son admirable mémoire, donnait à ses leçons un vif et stimulant intérêt qui éperonnait au possible le zèle de l'étudiant. Il ne se lassait jamais de tracer des rapprochements entre les développements sociaux du passé et du présent, de comparer les temps modernes à l'antiquité, c'est-à-dire les périodes de la plus haute civilisation grecque et latine, avec les temps modernes de l'Europe, en même temps qu'il comparait leurs origines et la période d'enfance de leurs races, avec les origines et l'enfance de la nôtre. Les efforts faits par les grands hommes d'État du passé pour résoudre les problèmes de la politique, étaient illustrés, commentés par lui par rapport aux problèmes qui agitaient l'Angleterre à ce moment. Cette étude des périodes comparées, cette contemplation des actions des hommes célèbres, qu'on considère ces actions soit comme l'effet, soit comme la cause, des événements au milieu desquels elles font saillie, étaient pour lui le moyen le plus efficace d'apporter au citoyen, je dirai même au genre humain, la conscience de ses devoirs.

Quant aux langues classiques, qui jouaient pour lui un rôle aussi important dans l'enseignement de l'histoire que de la littérature, il désirait surtout que l'élève fût assez familier avec elles pour qu'elles lui fussent une voie facile de communication avec le savoir du passé, qu'il pût étudier, approfondir, dans le texte même, l'intelligence des Grecs et des Romains. Voici comment il se justifiait de vouloir faire une part aussi large à l'instruction classique : " Expulsez le grec et le latin de votre cadre, et vous bornez l'horizon de la génération actuelle à la contemplation de sa propre période et de celles qui l'ont précédé immédiatement ; vous retranchez tant de siècles de l'histoire du monde, et vous vous replacez sous les mêmes conditions que si l'existence de la race humaine avait commencé au seizième siècle. Pour l'élève même chez qui le résultat d'une éducation classique est le moins visible, le moins apprécié par lui-même, il arrive souvent que ses études ont agi presque à son insu sur son intelligence et lui ont donné une culture générale du goût et une plus large compréhension de la vie."

Arnold comprenait mieux que les autres la vague maxime que nous répétons tous que " un professeur doit savoir se mettre au point de vue de l'élève." Ceux qui regardent ce problème bien en face savent ce qu'il renferme de difficultés. Il y a une différence énorme entre l'homme mûr, auquel l'étude et l'habitude d'enseigner ont rendu une langue morte absolument familière, arrivé à ce discernement critique et judicieux qui sait distinguer et apprécier les nuances du style, auquel l'expérience de la vie a fourni d'innombrables points de comparaison, et

ses jeunes élèves, qui, occupés des difficultés que leur présente la langue elle-même qu'ils étudient, n'ont pas l'esprit assez dégagé pour pouvoir contempler ou assimiler les idées exprimées dans cette langue. Le professeur qui sait combler l'abîme immense qui sépare ces deux points de vue ne se rencontre malheureusement pas tous les jours. Arnold était du nombre de ceux dont le talent pour l'enseignement touche presque au génie. Il avait le don d'inspirer le souffle de la vie à des méthodes qui, sans lui, auraient pu être singulièrement stériles. L'habitude qui survit encore dans nos *public schools* de traduire l'auteur classique mot à mot était pour lui une perte absolue de temps. Cette habitude produit dans la langue moderne, pour citer ses propres paroles, un " résultat absolument mauvais, car elle retient tous les défauts du langage et en exclut les qualités." Sa méthode, celle de son propre professeur, le D[r] Gabell à Winchester, était, même pour les classes les plus basses, de faire traduire la phrase entière en bloc, afin d'en saisir la portée. Les adversaires de ce système objectent qu'il développe la négligence. Il est probable que l'élève, pour arriver à un résultat satisfaisant, devrait être à même de combiner les deux procédés.

Fidèle à son système, qu'il poussait parfois peut-être un peu loin, de conserver lorsqu'il était possible les coutumes qu'il avait trouvées en vogue, Arnold laissa subsister celle qui exigeait que chaque élève, jusqu'au plus petit, fît tous les jours un certain nombre de vers grecs et latins. Il est évident que pour les élèves qui y prenaient plaisir, cet exercice pouvait être salutaire : mais, dans la plupart des cas,

c'était une tâche des plus stériles et des plus machinales. L'élève ordinaire se bornait à recopier des collections de vers qu'il retrouvait dans de vieux cahiers circulant à cet usage dans les classes depuis des années, ou à aligner lui-même des vers dépourvus de sens dont le seul mérite était de se rapprocher de la mesure et du rythme voulus. Mais, somme toute, le principe d'Arnold, qu'il ne fallait ni changer une tradition ancienne sans raison suffisante, ni l'épargner si cette raison existait, fonctionnait bien. Les modifications positives qu'il introduisait dans le cadre de l'instruction comprenaient l'étude des langues modernes, de l'histoire moderne et des mathématiques. Il n'aborda point l'enseignement des sciences naturelles, qui depuis ce temps, grâce aux découvertes de notre époque, s'est si rapidement développé. Il aurait été sans doute d'accord avec l'écrivain moderne qui a dit : " La nature et la signification de l'aoriste, les lois du syllogisme, rentrent en vérité dans la domaine de la science aussi absolument que les précessions des équinoxes ou les successions des couches géologiques. Il n'y a pas que la science proprement dite qu'on puisse enseigner selon l'esprit scientifique."

Il est, sans doute, plus difficile d'atteindre à un résultat donné, dans l'éducation comme dans autre chose, si on n'a pas devant soi, clairement défini, le but auquel on vise. Voilà peut-être la cause de nos incertitudes, de nos essais infructueux en ce moment. Arnold n'était entravé par aucune incertitude de conception ; il savait très clairement ce qu'il voulait faire, il savait quel était le résultat qu'il voulait obtenir. C'était de former, selon ses propres paroles,

" une école d'honnêtes hommes et de chrétiens." Pour atteindre ce but, il était nécessaire, selon lui, que ses élèves, l'intelligence assouplie par l'étude, et le moral développé par la discipline, fussent à même de comprendre et d'assimiler les préceptes des grands penseurs, des âmes élevées, de se rapprocher de l'idéal. Ils devaient être imbus des principes qu'Arnold avait passé sa vie à leur inculquer : défendre la religion et l'État, empêcher le lâche abus de la force physique, réprouver le mensonge et la délation, et en somme prendre leurs obligations morales au sérieux. Le successeur d'Arnold à Rugby, le Dr Percival, a dit de lui : " C'était un grand prophète parmi les maîtres d'école, plutôt qu'un instructeur dans le sens ordinaire du mot." Je me rappelle d'avoir demandé à Dean Stanley si Arnold enseignait beaucoup au *Sixth Form* pendant les classes. Pour toute réponse, Stanley, me montrant un petit carnet qu'il tenait à la main, me dit : " En fait de ce qui s'appelle l'instruction, ce carnet pourrait contenir tout ce qu'Arnold m'a jamais enseigné." Son influence était propre à stimuler, plutôt qu'à former, étant basée sur sa personnalité magnétique et sur l'influence qu'il exerçait, plutôt que sur des idées nouvelles.

VI

Il ne rentre pas dans mon cadre de parler en détail du rôle joué par Arnold dans la politique, pendant les années qui virent s'affermir peu à peu sa position à Rugby, ni de ses travaux littéraires, de son édition du Thucydide, de son *Histoire romaine*, et de

maints autres, qui occupèrent cependant une place considérable dans sa vie et qui ont ajouté à sa renommée.

Il prit une part active dans la crise soulevée par l'animosité des partis à l'occasion du *Reform Bill*, en 1832, combattu avec véhémence par les *Tories*, et s'intéressa vivement aux problèmes industriels du jour.

Ainsi que nous l'avons déjà dit, l'opposition soulevée d'abord par les tendances politiques et sociales d'Arnold fit place plus tard à une réaction très marquée en sa faveur. Sa nomination à la chaire d'histoire d'Oxford, en 1842, fut pour lui une source de satisfaction bien vive ; c'était le témoignage éclatant de cette réaction, aussi bien que l'occasion de renouveler ses rapports directs avec l'Université qu'il aimait tant. Mais il ne lui resta que le temps de faire une seule série de conférences ; ce fut au mois de février 1842. Au mois de juin de la même année, il mourut presque subitement à Rugby, après une maladie de quelques heures.

Il faut, en estimant les causes de l'influence d'Arnold, faire la part des deux livres célèbres dont nous avons déjà parlé, qui, écrits à deux points de vue absolument opposés, se suppléent et se complètent cependant, nous donnant l'image entière de la personnalité d'Arnold telle qu'elle parut à ceux qui l'avaient connu, la consolident, l'interprètent pour les générations à venir. La biographie de Stanley l'a fait comprendre au public comme apôtre ; *Tom Brown's Schooldays* en a fait un héros populaire. On pourrait dire qu'après la publication de ces deux livres Arnold est devenu

pour ses compatriotes, qui jusque là ne s'étaient que vaguement rendu compte de la transformation opérée par lui dans l'éducation, à la fois un héros de roman et un héros de la vie réelle.

Le Dr Moberly, évêque de Winchester, a écrit : " L'enthousiasme engendré par l'œuvre d'Arnold fut hors ligne. Ceux mêmes qui étaient loin d'être en accord avec ses vues tirèrent de son exemple et de ses méthodes des leçons de la plus haute importance."

Je cite un article paru dans le *Times* en 1896, plus de cinquante ans après la mort d'Arnold, à l'occasion de l'inauguration d'un monument qui lui fut érigé dans Westminster Abbey. " Personne n'opéra une transformation plus importante dans l'éducation, transformation dont se sont ressentis ceux-là même qui n'ont jamais été à un *public school*. Animé par le courage et la justice, Arnold a contribué à former le code viril et honorable par lequel les Anglais aspirent à être gouvernés. Nous retrouvons encore aujourd'hui dans le grand flot de la vie nationale l'effet de ce courant pur et salutaire qui s'y mêla il y a si longtemps."

Nous voici encore aujourd'hui en Angleterre, un demi-siècle plus tard, dans un moment d'incertitude et d'inquiétude vis-à-vis de notre éducation secondaire : nous nous efforçons en vain de la remettre au niveau de nos nécessités, en même temps que nous voudrions lui assurer une plus grande uniformité. On pourrait presque dire que c'est l'influence même d'Arnold, en démontrant ce que peut la puissante initiative d'un seul, qui a contribué à empêcher le public anglais d'accueillir l'idée de cette uniformité.

Ainsi que l'a si bien dit Thring, le célèbre directeur, le créateur presque, de l'école d'Uppingham : " Dans les vastes systèmes organisés d'éducation que nous rencontrons partout de nos jours, le professeur particulier se trouve de tous les côtés entravé par le règlement officiel, qui ne laisse que peu d'essor à son initiative personnelle. Nous sommes fiers, et à juste raison, nous autres Anglais, que, dans nos *public schools*, le directeur soit libre dans une large mesure, quand il n'est pas dominé par la tradition, de diriger son œuvre lui-même. Nous n'exagérons pas en disant que sous une puissante impulsion une telle école peut même dans une génération exercer une influence très prononcée sur le caractère national."

PART IV
THE MINOR FABULIST

These twelve topical fables, written in very humble imitation of La Fontaine, were published in the *Westminster Gazette* from June to October 1899. They were suggested in the first instance by Mr. F. C. Gould's admirable cartoon entitled " The Caterpillar that Won't " which by the courtesy of the *Daily News* (with which the *Westminster Gazette* is now amalgamated) is reproduced here. I republish also the letter to the *Westminster Gazette* which accompanied the first fable, as showing the genesis of these pieces. The other fables were not written in connection with the cartoons.

The Minor Fabulist ventures to quote La Fontaine's authority for departing, in case of need, from the customary rules of spelling, rhyme, and grammar.

THE CATERPILLAR THAT WON'T.

The Farmers in one of the Eastern States of America have found out that if they blow horns and trumpets under the fruit trees the Caterpillars tumble to the ground, and can be destroyed with ease. MR. CHAMBERLAIN *wishes he could do the same with the* OOM Caterpillar, *which declines to tumble.*

The Caterpillar That Won't

To the Editor of the *Westminster Gazette*.

DEAR SIR, 19 June 1899

It has occurred to me that in these days, when even the most elementary picture-books must needs have a purpose and an improving tendency, it might be desirable to teach very young children French and politics at the same time by bringing out a collection of fables, after La Fontaine, illustrated by some of your excellent political cartoons. As a specimen I beg to send you herewith a fable suggested by the cartoon which appeared in your issue of the 14th inst., entitled "The Caterpillar that Won't."

I am, dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
A MINOR FABULIST.

The subject of this fable is Mr. Chamberlain's publication in June 1899 of Sir Alfred Milner's dispatch dated May 5th, which was quite at variance with a speech made by Milner on May 12th, in which he advocated persuasive measures with regard to President Kruger.

La Chenille, l'Émissaire, le Chambellan et la Finesse conseillère

Le monde est grand, ami :
Mais partout,
Du commencement jusqu'au bout,
Sur les arbres, sous les charmilles
Il y a des chenilles.
C'est la providence qui l'a voulu ainsi.
Une chenille sur un arbre perchée,
Casée,
Une chenille du Transvaal, bondieusait.
Voilà au Transvaal ce qu'on fait le mieux.
Un chambellan d'outre-mer songeait.
Un chambellan songe-creux
Est quelquefois dangereux.
" Va," dit-il à l'Émissaire.
(Ne pas confondre avec le bouc du même nom,
Sinon . . . . . .)
" Expulse la chenille de son repaire :
En causant tu la feras tomber à terre."
L'Émissaire cause tant qu'il peut : on s'essouflerait à moins ;
Mais de tomber, point.

Alors la Finesse conseillère,
La Finesse aux ailes luisantes,
Aux idées promptes et changeantes,
Planant dans les cieux,
Souffle à l'Émissaire, " Je te dirai mieux :
C'est au son des cors de la paix et de la guerre
Qu'on fait tomber les chenilles à terre."
Sur ce l'Émissaire souffle, s'empresse,
Joue du cor de la paix
(Quitte à après
Jouer de celui de la guerre).
Le chambellan aussi, jouant bien
Du sien,
Emploie toute son adresse.
Mais la Finesse avait gardé
Pour elle du secret la moitié.
Car voici la véritable clé du mystère :
Si tous les cors ne jouent pas le même air
La Chenille ne tombe pas à terre.
Que cet avis profite à celui qui écoute.
La leçon vaut bien une chenille, sans doute.

This Fable refers to the Peace Conference at The Hague. No very definite conclusions were reached at the Conference.

Les Animaux qui cherchent la Paix

J'ai rencontré de par le monde, si je m'en souvien,
Des gens qui disent comme quoi
Le monde ne marche pas toujours bien.
Ont-ils raison, ont-ils tort ? ma foi,
Je n'en sais rien.
L'Ours et l'Aigle Noir, avec compère le Lion,
Mon voisin le Coq, et puis l'Aigle d'Outre-mer,
(Avec d'autres encore
Dont les noms nul n'ignore)
Convinrent un jour
Que le monde était à rebours.
Alors l'Ours : " J'ai consulté l'oracle bénit,
L'Expérience Monitrice ; " elle m'a dit,
" Tant que la paix parmi vous vous garderez
D'un surcroît de maux la terre vous preserverez."
" Donc, amis, pour assurer que la paix
Ne nous quitte jamais,
Selon les conseils de l'Expérience,
Assemblons une conférence."
" D'accord," dit le Coq. Dit le Lion, " De tout mon cœur."
Et puis l'Aigle d'Outre-mer, et les autres en chœur.

" H'm," dit l'Aigle Noir,
" Nous allons voir."
" Moi," dit le Lion,
" J'ai là un boulet bon,
Capable d'enrichir en un jour l'Achéron
En envoyant au trépas de suite plus d'un million.
J'en ménacerai la paix si elle nous quitte jamais."
Alors l'Aigle d'Outre-mer : " Je ne doute pas
Qu'il les faille envoyer au trépas,
Mais plus aimable serait la bombe à gaz asphyxiant
Que le boulet foudroyant."
" Plus de trépas," dit l'Ours. " Pour moi, mon idée
C'est de supprimer la marine armée."
Puis le Coq : " Pardon, voisins, et vous l'Ours mon compère,
Si je vous fais attendre tous :
Le temps de changer de ministère,
Je suis à vous."
Alors l'Aigle Noir, qui en sait plus que les autres
(C'est l'oiseau qui sait tout.
Surtout
Depuis peu, il sait très bien
Le chant tyrolien)
Dit : " Mes amis,
Je sais le latin, je l'ai appris.
Il y a un proverbe qui dit
Si vis pacem
Para bellum.
Pour vous il faut qu'il soit traduit :
Qui veut la paix prépare la guerre.
Donc, Blitz et Tonnerre !

Ma façon à moi de chercher la paix
Sera donc plus que jamais
De veiller à ce que mon armée
Soit sur un pied superbe montée."
" H'm," dit la Conférence—
" Est-ce ainsi que l'entend l'Expérience ? "

Méfiez-vous des proverbes, mes amis,
Ainsi que des aigles qui ont tout appris.

This fable refers to the controversy about Women's Suffrage.

Les Grenouilles qui veulent se faire aussi grosses que le Bœuf

Le grand La Fontaine qui voyait tout, a bien vu
Que notre mère, Dame Nature
Avait créé les bêtes de diverse nature.
A celui qui ne s'en était pas aperçu,
Il l'a ainsi appris,
Jadis.

" Une Grenouille vit un bœuf
Qui lui sembla de belle taille.
Elle, qui n'était pas grosse en tout comme un œuf,
Envieuse, s'étend, et s'enfle, et se travaille,
Pour égaler l'animal en grosseur,
Disant : ' Regardez bien, ma sœur ;
Est-ce assez ? dites-moi ; n'y suis-je point encore ? '
' Nenni.—M'y voici donc ?—Point du tout.—M'y voilà ?
—' Vous n'en approchez point.' La chétive pécore
S'enfla si bien qu'elle creva.

(La Fontaine, I. 3.)

Les Grenouilles ne sont pas plus sages de nos jours.
De tous côtés elles viennent étendre leur parcours.
Chacune s'enfle et se travaille
Pour égaler du bœuf la taille.
Disant : " Regardez bien, ma sœur, regardez,

Me voici sur l'estrade—je pérore.
Est-ce assez ? "
" Nenni." — Me voici membre du School-Board—
n'y suis-je point encore ? "
" Point du tout." La Grenouille rage.
" Je parle bien haut. Je réclame le
suffrage.
" Je veux être aldervoman — je me
veux faire
Comté conseillère.
A présent ça y est, assurément ?
—Ma sœur, aucunement."
" Du coup je me fais médecin.
A présent point de doute
Le bœuf j'égale enfin."
" Hélas ! ma sœur, je doute
Que vous n'y soyez pas encore."
Alors la chétive pécore
Ressemble ses pareilles, leur destinée
déplore.
Elles envahissent la vie de toutes les parts,
Abordent les lois, la science, les arts,
Disant : " Regardez bien ma sœur.
Nous y voilà enfin ? "
" Hélas ! j'ai peur
Qu'il n'en soit rien."
Puis le Bœuf : " Mes compagnes les Gren-
ouilles,
Si accortes et si gentilles,
Vous qui dans vos marais
Sautillez, charmantes et gaies,
Croyez-moi, si votre taille égalait la
mienne

Il n'y aurait pas de monde qui tienne.
Vous qui, ne craignant rien,
D'une chose à une autre sautez vite, et si bien,
Si vous aviez mon poids
Mon Dieu, que de fois
Vous ébranleriez la machine
Et la mettriez à ruine ! "
Si le Bœuf est plus digne, et plus agile la Grenouille
Que celui-là reste en place, que celle-ci sautille ;
Que chacun garde son rôle : c'est plus avantageux
Et le monde ne s'en trouvera que mieux.

This Fable refers to the cordiality displayed by William II towards a French training ship and its Cadets. This cordial meeting between Germany and France aroused the misgivings of Russia.

L'Aigle, le Coq, et l'Amitié

" L'Aigle et le Chat-huant leurs querelles cessèrent,
Et firent tant qu'ils s'embrassèrent.
L'un jura foi de roi, l'autre foi de hibou.
Qu'ils ne se goberaient leurs petits peu ni prou."
(La Fontaine, V. 18.)

L'aigle a quelquefois de ces bons mouvements ;
Et ce n'est pas seulement avec les chats-huants
Qu'il se lie en amitié.
Mais l'amitié, lecteur, est une chose compliquée :
Tel choisit son ami parce qu'il en a besoin,
Un autre par géographie, parce que c'est son voisin,
Un troisième par sympathie : ou quelquefois même,
Un ami il choisit
Par dépit,
Pour l'enlever à un quatrième.
Le proverbe n'a pas toujours raison qui dit
" Qui se ressemble s'assemble " :
Il me semble
Que les proverbes se trompent quelquefois comme les autres.
Mais, chers lecteurs, aux esprits comme les vôtres
Il sera facile d'apprendre
L'amitié à comprendre.
Vous savez l'histoire naturelle ? Non ?
Permettez que je vous fasse la leçon.

L'Aigle Noir, mes amis, est donc un oiseau :
Son bec de fer lui tient lieu de museau.
Altier, impérieux, il plane dans les airs,
Échange des saluts avec l'univers.
Apprenez que le Coq est un oiseau aussi :
Mais bien plus petit, celui-ci.
Le Coq a pour ami l'Ours hyperboréen.
Ici la ressemblance n'est certes pour rien ;
Car, sachez-le, l'Ours n'est nullement un plumitif :
On le voit en le scrutant d'un œil attentif.
Mais s'il n'a pas le bec à la lame aiguisée
De l'Aigle Noir son voisin, ni la griffe acérée,
En revanche son gros corps couvre bien plus de terrain
Que celui de l'Aigle, son cousin germain.
Le Coq s'en allant un jour
Prendre l'Ours pour faire un tour,
Il se trouva que celui-ci
Était sorti ;
Ni sa rentrée sitôt à espérer,
L'Ours étant occupé à conférer.
Alors l'Aigle, planant sur l'univers,
Aperçoit le Coq du haut des airs.
Bon compagnon, notre aigle, à ses heures.
" Soyez le bienvenu, Coq, en nos demeures.
D'après ce qu'on dit, un ami vous cherchez :
En moi cet ami vous trouverez.
Un ours et un coq, ça ne fait pas la paire ;
Un aigle ferait bien mieux votre affaire.
Ce n'est raison qui vaille
Que nous ne soyons pas de même taille—
Que vos griffes sont moins longues et votre bec plus petit,

On est oiseau, quoi ! et son pareil on choisit."
Dit le Coq : " Je crois, Aigle, mon compagnon
Que tu as pour cette fois raison."

A présent, chers lecteurs, la chose est expliquée :
Vous savez ce que c'est l'amitié.

This Fable refers to the speech delivered by Mr. Chamberlain in favour of the attitude of the Government towards President Kruger. A large section of the Press both here and abroad protested against the possibility of the nation being dragged into war.

La Guerre, la Nation, et le Chambellan

" Un jour, sur ses longs pieds, allait je ne sais où
Le Héron au long bec emmanché d'un long cou."
(La Fontaine, VII. 4.)

Pour un héron, s'en aller ainsi, peu importe ;
Mais quand c'est un chambellan qui part de la sorte
Pour le pays de je ne sais où,
Un chambellan au bras long, emmanché d'un long crédit.
Qui son chemin poursuit,—
C'est alors
Que bien fort
Il faut crier Casse-cou !
Le dit chambellan un jour s'en allant
Dans un pays où les hommes et la nature
Sont étranges également,
Cherche des compagnons d'aventure.
Les voilà tous à la dérive.
" Allons," dit-il, " qui m'aime me suive !—
Toi, Parlement, tu viens, n'est-ce pas ?
Et toi, Nation, aussi y vas ? "
La Nation hésite. " C'est bien loin ?
Est-ce une course faite pour me plaire ? "

" Sinon," dit-il,—" la belle affaire !—
Tu pourras toujours au besoin
Rebrousser chemin."
" En ce cas," dit la Nation,
" Je ne dis pas non."
Voilà tout le monde en route.
Mais toujours la Nation doute,
Hésite, . . .
Puis avec un frisson
Regarde l'horizon.
" Chambellan, cette compagne,
Quelle est-elle qui t'accompagne ?
Qui lente et fatale, à ta suite
Par vallon et par montagne
T'accompagne ? "
Dit le Chambellan : " Ne crains rien ;
Tout ira bien."
Mais la Nation
Tient bon.
" Je n'irai plus avant," dit-elle,
" Que je ne sache le nom de celle
Qui à la démarche cruelle
Pas à pas nous accompagne.
Quelle est-elle, cette noire compagne ?
Son nom ? " " Tu veux son nom ? La
Guerre."
" Elle ! O Chambellan, mon frère,
Arrête, arrête, je t'implore
Pendant qu'il est temps encore !
Ne nous casse pas le cou
Au pays de je ne sais où ! "
De ceci
La morale voici.

Si tu redoutes d'aller loin,
Si au besoin
Tu veux pouvoir rebrousser chemin,
Si tu crains de te casser le cou
Dans le pays de je ne sais où,—
Ne prends pour guide, ô Nation,
Ni chambellan, ni héron.

This Fable refers to the question of Uitlanders in the Transvaal. President Kruger (the " Chêne ") at last yielded to the representations of Hofmeyr (the " Roseau "), the Premier of Cape Colony, and a franchise measure was drawn up.

Le Roseau et le Chêne fin de siècle

Le Chêne un jour dit au Roseau :
" Vous avez bien sujet d'accuser la Nature ;
Un roitelet pour vous est un pesant fardeau ;
Le moindre vent qui d'aventure
Fait rider la face de l'eau,
Vous oblige à baisser la tête ;
Cependant que mon front, au Caucase pareil,
Non content d'arrêter les rayons du soleil,
Brave l'effort de la tempête."

* * * * *

" Votre Compassion," lui répondit l'Arbuste,
" Part d'un bon naturel ; mais quittez ce souci ;
Les vents me sont moins qu'à vous redoutables :
Je plie, et ne romps pas."

(La Fontaine, I. 22.)

En lisant ceci,
Et sachant combien est morale une fable,
La fin de l'histoire est inévitable ;
Le Chêne, déraciné,
Doit fatalement succomber,
Le Roseau, légume sensé,
Échapper,
Et le vent implacable continuer
A souffler.

Mais l'esprit moderne est plus sage.
Dans cet âge,
A cette époque où tout est sens dessus dessous,
Où nos enfants en savent plus long que nous,
Où les voitures marchent sans chevaux,
Où les femmes ont des congrès internationaux,
Et l'Église des crises comme les femmes d'autrefois,
Tout peut arriver ; et sans peine on conçoit
Un Chêne, un Roseau et un Vent,
Qui sauraient, occasion nécessitant,
Changer de tenue sagement.
Ainsi, mettons qu'il y ait dans un pays là-bas—
(Disons le pays des Transcarabas)—
Un Chêne ratatiné,
Bien enraciné ;
Que dans la même zone (disons au pays
Des Capipapis)—
Il existe des Roseaux :
Puis dans une région lointaine, au pays des Jingonaux,
Un Vent du Nord,
Soufflant bien fort,—
Voilà de quoi faire une palpitante fable.
Mais de nos jours tout cela pourra tourner à l'aimable,
Si le Chêne cède à l'exemple et aux instances
Du Roseau, s'accommode aux circonstances,
Plie et ne rompt pas ; (c'est bien plus agréable)—
Si de son côté le Vent du Nord
Consent à souffler moins fort,—
Tout peut encore finir bien,
Et n'arriver rien.

Toutefois, l'oisive Opinion regardant faire,
Et contemplant cette affaire,
Osera dire peut-être : " Mais alors,
Vent du Nord,
Pourquoi commencer par souffler si fort ? "
A quoi le Vent : " La chose
Sur l'éternel dramatique repose.
Il faut bien qu'un vent fasse quelque chose,
Qu'il tempête à ses heures—sinon
A quoi bon
Avoir du poumon ? "
Ceci peut être vrai : mais quoi qu'il en die,
Après la tempête il faut une accalmie.
Ne trouvez-vous pas que j'ai raison ?
Dites, oisive Opinion ?

This Fable refers to the question of granting Old Age Pensions and relieving the aged poor without their being thrown on to the Poor Law.

Les Oiseaux, la Vieillesse, et les N'importe-Quoi

Une Hirondelle en ses voyages
Avait beaucoup appris. Quiconque a beaucoup vu
Peut avoir beaucoup retenu.
(La Fontaine, I. 8.)

Une Hirondelle (sans doute des plus sages,
Puisqu'elle regardait autour d'elle
Même en volant à tire d'aile)
Avait cru remarquer que dans certains pays,
Où l'on vit en bons amis,
On portait secours
Aux pauvres sur leurs vieux jours.
Elle trouvait cela bien,
N'étant pas de ceux qui disent : " Ce n'est rien,
C'est un vieux qui se noie " ;
Mais plutôt de ceux qui se feraient une joie
De le tirer de là.—Mais le moyen ?—Un jour
Les oiseaux discutèrent la chose tour à tour.
Tous étaient d'accord que pour un pauvre vieux
Il n'y a rien de mieux
Que de recevoir du secours
Au déclin de ses jours.
Ceci semble prouvé.
Les oiseaux ayant trouvé,
Remplissent l'air de cris d'accord et d'allégresse.

" A présent," dit le Hibou, interrompant leur liesse
(C'est lui le plus sage, aussi bien que le plus laid),
" Dites-moi, amis, comment on fait ?
Comment nous ferons pour donner en suffisance
Une provision à nos vieux amis ?
Faut-il leur donner une abondance
De nids,
Ou leur donner de quoi les faire ? "
" Ceci," dit la Grive, " est une autre affaire."
La Grive, avec raison, de son beau nid est fière.
" Mais construire un nid ordinaire
N'est pas bien difficile.
Je dirais même, rien de plus facile."
" Je crois bien," dit l'Hirondelle. " Un petit creux qu'on troue
Sous le toit, et qu'on emplit ensuite de boue . . ."
Dit la Corneille : " Un bon nid au sommet d'un arbre,
Fait de tvigues et de feuilles—c'est plus beau que le marbre.
Quel bonheur, ô dieux ! d'y rentrer vers la nuit,
Et tous à la fois, faisant beaucoup de bruit ! "
" Non," dit l'Alouette
Tête de girouette,
Volatile peu réfléchie —
" Ceci est trop haut,
Ce n'est pas ce qu'il faut.
Croyez-moi, mettez votre nid dans une prairie,
Au milieu de l'herbe qui le lie ;
Installez-y votre vieux pour la vie."
" Tout beau,"
Dit le Moineau,
Bon enfant.

" Faites tout simplement
Un nid comme le mien.
On le peut faire très bien
De paille ou de foin,
D'éclats de bois,
De bouts de ficelle,
De n'importe-quoi."
" J'y suis," dit l'Hirondelle.
" Donnons à ces vieux
Nécessiteux
Assez de n'importe-quoi, de paille et de foin
Pour se faire des nids au besoin."
" Très bien," dirent tous, " ça y est.
A donner on sera prêt."
" D'autant plus," dit le Hibou, " qu'on trouvera certainement
Parmi eux,
De pauvres vieux,
Qui prudemment
Auront tâché de faire une petite provision,
A laquelle nous ajouterons notre cotisation."
" Pardon," dit la Grive. " J'ai bien le cœur sensible,
Mais ceci ne serait pas possible.
Nous n'aidons que ceux qui ont été imprudents,
Imprévoyants."
" Seulement," dit l'Alouette
Tête de girouette,
" Je ne comprends pas bien . . . . ."
" Toi, Alouette, tu ne comprends jamais rien.
La chose est décidée," dit l'Hirondelle, " sur place.
La gent plumée,
Aimable et sensée,

Veut bien pourvoir aux besoins des anciens de sa race."

" Très bien," dirent les oiseaux, " très bien.
A présent il ne manque rien."

" Il manque seulement," dit le Hibou, " la paille et le foin,
Et les n'importe-quoi, dont on aura besoin."

" Bel embarras ! " dirent les autres. " Combien faut-il ? "

" Mes amis,
Pour faire tous ces nids,
Il faudra dix millions de n'importe-quoi."

" Dix millions ! " dirent, atterrés, tous les oiseaux à la fois.

" Où trouver dix millions de n'importe-quoi ? "
Les malheureux ne savent où donner de la tête.

" Voilà," dit l'Hirondelle, " la seule chose qui nous arrête.
Mais ce n'est que le dernier pas qui coûte."

A tout mauvais chemin
Il y a une fin :
A tout empêchement,
Un tournant.

Mais, lecteurs, vous comprendrez qu'on se sente aux abois
Lorsqu'il s'agit de trouver tant de n'importe-quois
A la fois.

The incident alluded to in this Fable is that two clergymen of the Church of England, being forbidden by their Bishops to use incense, or to have lighted candles on the altar, appealed to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York against the prohibitions, alleging that the law on these points was not clearly defined. This took place in 1899.

La Loi, les Prêtres, et sa Grandeur

Jupiter dit un jour : " Que tout ce qui respire
S'en vienne comparaître aux pieds de ma grandeur.
Si dans son composé il trouve à redire,
Il peut le déclarer sans peur."

(La Fontaine, I. 7.)

Quelqu'un — ne pas chercher son nom, mes frères,
Les fables ont souvent de ces mystères ;
Cela leur est permis, je pense —
Dit un jour : " Que tout ce qui encense
S'en vienne comparaître aux pieds de Ma Grandeur."
Donc, par devant Sa Grandeur comparurent un jour
Des plaideurs, pour plaider leur cause tour à tour.
C'était — lâchons le mot — des prêtres.
Êtres
Cantanquéreux,
Ces litigieux
Religieux.
Par malheur,
La Loi, ce jour-là, n'était point de la partie :
Il arrive de ces meschances dans la vie.

Donc, on agit sans elle.
L'argutie marche, s'échauffe de plus belle ;
Devant Sa Grandeur on débat la chose,
Démontrant sur quoi chaque grief repose.
Il s'agissait,
A ce qu'il paraît,
De certaines coûtumes, certains usages
Ayant persisté à travers les âges.
Les plaideurs les voulaient continuer,
La Loi les supprimer.
Mais (je l'ai dit déjà)
La Loi
Je ne sais pourquoi,
N'était pas de la partie ce jour-là.
" Allons, mes amis," dit Sa Grandeur,
" Puisque par malheur
La Loi aujourd'hui
N'est pas ici,
Nous aviserons ensemble :
Je vous dirai ce qu'il me semble
Qu'elle aurait pensé si elle eut été ici
Aujourd'hui ;
Ou bien ce qu'elle a pu penser avant,
Mettons trois siècles auparavant.
Voilà, mes amis :
Davantage ne puis."
" Seulement," hasarda un plaideur,
" Après ? quand Votre Grandeur
Nous aura donné son avis ? "
" Mes amis,
A vous d'obéir si le cœur vous en dit.
Obéir, c'est-à-dire, à un sentiment :
Ici rien d'autre pour le moment."

Alors le plaideur,
Dans son for intérieur
Réfléchit.
" Si ce n'est qu'un sentiment qui nous lie,
Attendons que la Loi se mette de la partie :
De sa voix claire
Elle réglera l'affaire.
Jusque là tenons-nous cois,
Quittes à reprendre la chose une autre fois."
Sur ce un Moraliste,
S'adressant au Fabuliste :
" Si dans la vie
Ce n'est qu'un sentiment qui nous lie,
La vie repose
Sur pas grand'chose."
" Cependant . . . . . .
Pardon, Moraliste — un instant :
Faisons la part du Sentiment.
Est-ce que la vie repose
Sur autre chose ? "

This Fable refers to the visit paid by Delcassé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Russia, where he had been most cordially received, and entertained at a banquet. He announced on his return that the visit was of a purely private and friendly character.

Le Coq en Déplacement d'Été

Il faut autant qu'on peut obliger tout le monde :
On a souvent besoin d'un plus petit que soi.
(La Fontaine, II. 11.)

J'ajoute à cette haute moralité un dicton :
Qu'à plus forte raison,
Selon moi,
Il faut surtout obliger les plus grands que soi.
Ce n'est que prudent,
Dans un monde où les plus petites gens
Ont le pire destin.
A présent
Laissons la fable poursuivre son chemin,
L'Ours en son empire songeait.
— Que faire en un empire, à moins qu'on ne songe,
Si la pensée vous ronge ? —
Même il broyait
Du noir,
Mécontent d'avoir
Mis au monde une conférence
Qui n'avait pas tourné selon son espérance.
Ce voyant, le Coq, oiseau vif et galant,
Court, vole, se précipite,
Très obligeamment,

Pour faire à l'Ours une visite.
Histoire, sans doute, de le distraire,
Voulant plaire.
Il trouve l'Ours dans sa tanière. " Après ?
Que se passa-t-il ? " vous me demanderez.
Ah, cette fois-ci vous m'en demandez gros ;
Même trop.
Car comment savoir ce qui se passe dans une tanière ?
Tout au plus peut-on se hasarder
A deviner
Que, de n'importe quelle manière,
Le Coq aura voulu consoler son frère,
Et sagement
Lui déconseiller le déplacement.
Mais ensuite je puis vous dire ceci :
Que le Coq, rentré chez lui,
Interrogé sur sa belle action,
Répond, modeste comme sa nation,
Que c'était tout bonnement
Un voyage d'agrément
Qu'il avait entrepris si gaillardement :
Porter un toast, débiter un compliment,
Et s'en revenir. Dame ! pourquoi pas ?
Ne serait-ce le cas
Qu'un Coq, comme un autre, pût avoir la licence
De voyager en été ? Je le pense.
Même l'humble fabuliste prétend,
Le cas échéant,
Avoir le droit d'en faire autant.

This refers to the attitude, intensely resented by the French, of the British Press on the Dreyfus question. The French retaliated angrily with allusions to South Africa and Ireland.

Le Lion étonné de voir que les autres ne font pas comme lui

" On se voit d'un autre œil qu'on ne voit son prochain.
Le fabricateur souverain
Nous créa besaciers tous de même manière,
Tant ceux du temps passé que du temps d'aujourd'hui :
Il fit pour nos défauts la poche de derrière,
Et celle de devant pour les défauts d'autrui."
(La Fontaine, I. 7.)

La fabricatrice souveraine, notre mère la Nature,
A créé les bêtes de diverse stature,
Voulant la variété ;
Puisque l'ennui naquit un jour de l'uniformité,
Elle les doua d'un aspect, d'un esprit différent,
Comme fonds de commerce leur donnant
A chacun plus d'une qualité,
Et quelques petits défauts par-dessus le marché.
C'est plus qu'il n'en faut pour traverser la vie.
Mais voilà Dame Malice qui se met de la partie,
Et, sournoise, modifie
Les dons de sa commère : décrétant que pour chacun
Les qualités du voisin,
Au lieu de lui causer envie,
Lui sembleraient des défauts,
Chacun de ses propres défauts une qualité.

C'est ainsi que le monde
S'en va à la ronde,
A son insu aveuglé.
Dans les rets d'un grand filet, d'immense contour,
Toute la race du Coq fut empêtrée un jour.
Pas moyen d'en sortir : car comment dévider
Ces mailles enchevêtrées,
Emmêlées ?
Le Coq veut d'abord les arracher, déchirer ;
Puis voyant que point il n'aboutit,
Ne réussit,
Il recommence
Avec courage et patience,
Galamment,
Vaillamment,
Les mailles à dévider,
Une à une à délier.
Et Dieu sait s'il en avait, du fil à retordre,
Pour défaire tous ces nœuds, les remettre en ordre !
Le Lion, en attendant, le regardant faire,
Se dit : " C'est bien curieux en cette affaire
Que notre ami n'agisse pas comme un Lion.
Quelle en peut être la raison ?
A chaque pas sa conduite de la mienne diffère !
Je vais le lui dire ; cela l'aidera, j'espère :
Le lui dire et redire, bien haut et souvent."
Mais, Lion, n'est-il pas évident
Qu'un Coq est de toi bien différent ?
Tu l'ignorais ? Vois donc, cependant :
Lui est plumé,
Toi velu : lui vif et animé
Mobile,
Toi grave et plus lourd, plus digne, moins agile :

Toi parent d'un lionceau, lui parent d'un œuf.
Dans toutes ces remarques rien de bien neuf.
Mais il en résulte qu'il n'y a rien d'étonnant
A ce qu'un Lion et un Coq agissent différemment.
Allons, Lion, regarde autour de toi
Et voi
Si l'expérience ne fait pas de cette vérité foi :
Il y a ici-bas, notez bien,
Deux moyens d'agir pour chacun :
Il y a le bon, qui est le sien,
Le mauvais, celui du voisin.

This also arises out of the "affaire Dreyfus." There was a strong feeling in Great Britain, Germany and the United States that the forthcoming Paris exhibition of 1900 ("Foire voisine") should be boycotted as a protest against the verdict of the court-martial at Rennes.

Le Boycotteur devenu Chevalier errant

Je ne vois point de créature
Se comporter modérément.
(La Fontaine, IX. 11.)

Ce n'est certes pas au Boycotteur que la nature
A départi un tempérament
Qui sache garder cette juste mesure.

Il y eut de tous temps des chevaliers errans,
Bonnes gens,
Qui, courant le monde à la recherche d'aventures,
Ont eu pour but de redresser les injures.
Un Boycotteur, donc, qui avait beaucoup lu
— Vous me demandez ce qu'est un Boycotteur ?
Apprenez que c'est un être qui porte malheur ;
A ceux qu'il attaque il sait jeter un sort :
A la longue, il triomphe même du plus fort.
Il y avait une fois, j'allais vous le dire,
Un Boycotteur ayant l'habitude de lire.
Qui, pénétré des exploits de maint chevalier errant,
Voulut à son tour en faire autant.
Le voilà courant affolé sur le grand chemin,
Pour redresser n'importe quoi lui tombe sous la main.
Mais une douce lumière sur le chemin se répand :

La Justice et la Vérité, le front haut, s'avançant,
Gravement, sûrement, poursuivant leur chemin,
Passent devant lui la torche à la main.
Le Boycotteur ose vouloir les accompagner,
Au besoin les aider.
Mais la Justice au front austère
Lui répond, grave et sévère :
" Boycotteur, en arrière !
Ici tes pareils n'ont que faire ;
A nous de porter la lumière."
Elles s'éloignent. Mais lui continue à chercher,
Se disant : " Puisqu'il y a quelque chose à redresser,
Quelqu'un à punir, punissons quelqu'un."
A ces mots, il voit de loin
De bons négociants, paisiblement
A la foire voisine s'en allant.
" Ça y est ! " dit le Boycotteur. " Tapons dessus !
Pas de foire ! pas de négoce ! n'en parlons plus ! "
Par bonheur il passe en ce moment
De gens sensés un attroupement.
Ils s'arrêtent, tout supris.
" Mais Boycotteur, qu'est-ce qui t'a pris ?
Taper de la sorte sur un innocent
Négociant ! "
A qui notre énergumène, se démenant,
Tonitruant,
Crie tant qu'il peut :
" Mais oui ! mais oui ! " et il tape dessus.
" Le monde est mauvais,
Rempli de méfaits ;
Il faut punir quelqu'un . . . que quelqu'un succombe!
Allons, amis, ce devoir nous incombe."
Sur ce il continue à taper de plus fort,

Menaçant les malheureux de leur jeter un sort.
Alors les gens sensés, prenant leur parti,
Se disent : " A tapageur
Tapageur et demi."
Ils se mettent donc à crier aussi.
Mais pas aussi fort que le Boycotteur,
Car dans ce monde de malheur,
Qui crie le plus fort n'est pas le plus sensé.
" Eh bien," direz-vous, " ont-ils empêché
Le Boycotteur
De jeter un sort, de porter malheur ? "
Ceci, ami lecteur, jusqu'ici on ignore.
A cette heure on continue à crier encore.

This fable refers to the incident when Cecil Rhodes presented President Kruger, in September 1899, with a lion from the Zoological Gardens at Pretoria. President Kruger however declined to accept the lion, and returned it to the sender.

Le Lion envoyé en Cadeau

" *Éconduire un lion rarement se pratique.*"
(La Fontaine, IV. 12.)

Ainsi parla un jour le Sage poétique,
Le bonhomme La Fontaine, notre ami à tous,
Qui guère ne se trompait comme moi ou comme vous.

Voici, mes amis, une histoire véridique,
Tant soit peu prosaïque.
Un bourgeois bon enfant, vivant au bout du monde,
(Licencié de l'université,)
Sachant que les cadeaux entretiennent l'amitié,
Se mit un jour en frais
Pour envoyer à un voisin hollandais
En don
Un superbe Lion.
Ce qui se passa ensuite, devinez ?
" Parbleu ! la réponse est facile," vous me direz.
" Un billet de remercîment,
Une cage en guise de logement,
Et voilà la fin de l'incident."
La fin ? cher lecteur, je le voudrais bien ;
Je regrette de vous dire qu'il n'en est rien.
Le voisin de Hollande a carrément refusé :
Le gentil toutou se voit renvoyé.

C'est, ma foi, un voisin dénué de raison,
Qui ferme ainsi sa porte au nez d'un lion.
Las ! que la vie est difficile aujourd'hui !
De ton gracieux temps il n'en était pas ainsi,
Maître Jean ! Les choses d'ici-bas ont bien changé,
Depuis que tu posas ta plume irisée.
Dans les bons vieux temps où la terre tu embellis
Chacun restait chez soi où le ciel l'avait mis.
Le Hollandais en Hollande — ah, le bon vieux temps !
L'Asie était par l'éléphant occupée,
L'Amérique par le crocodile peuplée,
Et ainsi de suite.
Pour abréger, passons vite,
Notons seulement ceci :
Le Lion restait chez lui.
Mais à présent, ô spectacle funeste !
Chacun se déplace, empiète sur le reste ;
Le Lion surtout
Veut se fourrer partout.
Que faire d'un Lion qui partout se fourre,
Si fort, si éloquemment qu'on discoure ?
Eh bien, il faut faire comme le voisin de Hollande,
Lequel lui demanda
De s'en aller. Et puis — s'il ne s'en allait pas ?

Dame, voilà l'embarras . . .
La Fontaine n'avait pas prévu le cas.
Il avait raison, le Sage poétique :
Éconduire le Lion n'est pas chose pratique.